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Detection & Management of Opioid Exposure for Public Safety Working Dogs

Although this subject is outside the usual scope of FirstWatch's focus, it's recognized that working service dogs that assist local, state and federal law enforcement and other agency partners (FBI, DEA, TSA, MPs, etc.), do so at great risk and deserve to be protected from harm.

We are including links to this program which include assessment, treatment, and transport for further care of public safety working dogs who have been exposed to opiates and may need advanced care and possible reversal with naloxone (Narcan) to survive. We think it belongs on our Health Intelligence Page so that those that work around these animals and potential situations are aware of when and how to treat them. We applaud Drs. Maureen McMichael and Ashley Mitek, the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, Working Dog HQ, the Carle Regional Emergency Medical System and Carle Arrow Ambulance for developing this information, providing an outline and materials for training, piloting the training, and readily sharing it all for vets, first responders, and working dog handlers.

The need is not theoretical, several articles point to more than thirty service dogs who have died because of their exposure. Many parts of the program are complete such as a comprehensive training video for interested vets to use with EMS personnel, an emergency protocol for assessing if an opioid exposure occurred and appropriate treatment, and a sample law for states who may require it to allow use of ambulances to transport. In a disclaimer on their website, it's noted that some components are in development and not yet published.

Listed below are links to begin exploring this topic. Click on tabs and links within the websites to discover more info and please refer to their websites for updated or added resources.

An article with links, from the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, introducing the need and development of the program for protection from and treatment of opiate exposure for working service dogs (i.e. scent detection dogs): <http://vetmed.illinois.edu/training-video-overdose-working-dogs/>

A link to the homepage of Working Dog HQ for easy access to several links centered around medical care for working service dogs. Keep your eyes on this page since there are several different pictures, with links to info, rotating on the page every six to 10 seconds. Or, you can click on the little circles at the bottom of the pictures to change more quickly. <https://workingdoghq.com/>

A link to another page of Working Dog HQ which shows the Emergency Protocol for Canine Opioid Exposure or Suspected Exposure (click to download) and a video, with the Police Training Institute, demonstrating the use of naloxone: <https://workingdoghq.com/resources/>

Another link to more specific information about determining a clinical need and general care for a dog needing naloxone reversal and to a PowerPoint presentation designed for veterinarians to use to teach & support naloxone and other treatment for working dogs: <https://workingdoghq.com/working-dog-opioid-reversal/>

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For up-to-date, EMS specific information on emerging diseases, please visit

www.firstwatch.net/hi