

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXXXXX - By email

**Force Disclosure Unit
Police Headquarters**
London Road
DEVIZES
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN

Date 9th May 2024

Our Ref FOI 2024-490

Dear XXXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 6th May 2024, concerning Injuries Caused by Police Dogs.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

Following receipt of your request, research was conducted by the Dog Unit Manager at Wiltshire Police.

Your request for information has now been considered and I am able to respond as follows.

You wrote:

Please answer the following questions for the calendar years of 2022, 2023 and the period between 01 Jan 2024 and 06/05/24.

Please could you tell me on how many occasions a police dog has been found to have caused an injury to a member of the public? Please send me records detailing the injury, telling me the ethnicity/race of the person injured, the nature of the injury, the age of the person who was injured, the date of the recorded injury and the reason why the dog came into contact with the person (i.e. was the dog chasing a suspected drug dealer, was it an innocent member of the public who the dog mistakenly attacked etc). Could you also please tell me what breed of dog injured the person and whether it was a general service dog, explosive detection dog, drug detection dog etc.

Could you please tell me, as of the date of this request, how many police dogs your force has (telling me how many of these are general service dogs, drug detection dogs etc) in active operation?

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Our response:

I have considered your request and I am able to provide a partial response to your request. Some of the information relevant to this request is exempt by virtue of Section 31(1)(a)(b) - Law Enforcement.

Section 31 is a qualified prejudice-based exemption and therefore requires Wiltshire Police to establish the harm in disclosure, along with the public interest favouring and against disclosure.

Please could you tell me on how many occasions a police dog has been found to have caused an injury to a member of the public? Please send me records detailing the injury, telling me the ethnicity/race of the person injured, the nature of the injury, the age of the person who was injured, the date of the recorded injury and the reason why the dog came into contact with the person (i.e. was the dog chasing a suspected drug dealer, was it an innocent member of the public who the dog mistakenly attacked etc). Could you also please tell me what breed of dog injured the person and whether it was a general service dog, explosive detection dog, drug detection dog etc.

The information you require here for 2022, 2023 and year to date 2024 is as follows :-

2022

White Female, 32yrs attempting suicide minor injury whilst saving life. 1/06/22. GSD

White male 26yrs, kennel hand in kennels minor injury while removing feed bowl. 07/04/22. Malinois

White male 63yrs, Accidental bite, due to faulty latch on cage, injury to hand 07/03/22 Mali

White male, 22yrs, drugs dealer attempting escape, bite to ankle, minor injury. 28/11/22 GSD

White Female, Vet, dog bite arm during examination. Puncture wounds to arm. 15/11/22 GSD

White male 17yrs. Drunk driver, offensive weapon, attempting to escape. Bite to foot minor injury. 01/06/22 GSD

2023

White male, 23yrs, Stolen vehicle, left hip minor injury. 11/05/23 GSD

White male, 40yrs, missing person, minor bite to arm on locating person hidden in undergrowth. 24/04/23 GSD

2024 to date

White male, 20yrs, sexual offender, bite to thigh due to movement, minor injury. 07/05/24 GSD

Please note, all of the above recorded bites are by General Patrol Dogs.

Could you please tell me, as of the date of this request, how many police dogs your force has (telling me how many of these are general service dogs, drug detection dogs etc) in active operation?

There are 13 general patrol dogs

5 Firearm Support Dogs

Currently there are 4 Drugs detection dogs with a further two in training.

There are 4 other detection dogs in other skills areas. The exact number of detection dogs in each of the other skills areas is exempt from disclosure. Please see below harm and public interest tests.

Harm test

Disclosing information into the public domain - specifically the number of detection dogs that work within a specific detection area - would undermine the core principles of policing; namely to prevent and detect crime. Disclosure of this information could cause substantial harm to planned policing operations, and all individuals involved i.e. police employees and the community. If Wiltshire Police were to place this information into the public domain, this would prejudice our ability to prevent and detect crime, and to apprehend or prosecute offenders; providing offenders with the information they would need to evade detection, and therefore effecting the Force's ability to protect the community.

Factors favouring disclosure

Placing this information into the public domain would lead to an increased public awareness on these matters. This in turn may lead to a reduction in crime or more information being supplied by the public, and would also allow the public to better protect themselves against crime. Disclosure would also ensure that Wiltshire Police can be held accountable for our actions, and show the Force is being as open and transparent with the public as possible.

Factors against disclosure

Providing the number of detection dogs that work within a specific detection area would hinder the prevention and detection of crime. This would result in investigations being compromised, as offenders would be able to gain valuable information that would assist them in evading capture; i.e. they could use this information to understand not only our Force capabilities but also our theoretical limitations. They could then use this information to better plan their criminal activity. By using this information, offenders could improve the likelihood of them evading capture - the public would then be put at a greater risk resulting in trust in the Force diminishing and increase of crime being seen. Disclosure of information sensitive to operations and tactics used would severely impact on the Force's resources, which in turn would also assist offenders to evade capture and/or commit more crime.

Balance test

Whilst there is a public interest in transparency and openness between the Force and the public, in addition to the public seeing how the Force are engaging with the threat from criminals, there is a stronger interest in ensuring the public are protected from the threat of criminals, and that the enforcement of the law and the prevention and detection of crime is upheld. To disclose

information which is likely to assist offenders would seriously undermine the effective delivery of operational law enforcement and is therefore exempt from disclosure.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Constabulary, when refusing to provide information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which: (a) states that fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this letter acts as a Refusal Notice for those aspects of your request.

Exemptions applied:

Section 31(1)(a)(b) - Law Enforcement

I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed to me and been considered in the light of your request within the time constraints applicable under the legislation.

Wiltshire Police would like to thank you for the interest that you have shown in the Force.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Penny
Decision Maker

Wiltshire Police offers a re-examination of your case under its review procedure.



Force Disclosure Unit

Wiltshire Police HQ, London Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2DN



Keeping Wiltshire Safe

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Wiltshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing to the:

Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police Headquarters,
London Road, Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 2DN

Email at disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk.

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Force Disclosure Unit within 20 working days of the Force's response to the original Fol request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing to include confirmation of the reasons for the review. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker, who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Force Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The Independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision Maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Please note that the ICO's offices will be closed for the foreseeable future and are therefore unable to receive correspondence via post.

If you should wish to contact them, please visit <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

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