

THE BIG DOG



NICK SHORT/Standard-Examiner

Dennis Moore kneels with the Weber State University Police Department's newest recruit, Balou, on Thursday in Ogden. Balou is the department's first bomb-detecting dog.

Weber State adds bomb dog to police squad

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OGDEN — Can a dog be a Wildcat?

The Weber State University Police Department is answering that question by starting a K-9 program.

Balou, a 3-year-old German shepherd, and Officer Dennis Moore were recently state certified in explosives detection.

Chief Dane LeBlanc said Balou will be used mainly for detection, but also for patrol at the university, including at Wildcat football games. He said having the dog will be helpful when there are bomb threats, and because some

on-campus events require a bomb sweep.

"In the past, we have relied on dogs from Hill Air Force Base," he said, "but they are not always available."

LeBlanc cited a bomb threat last year that required the evacuation of the university's alumni building, and officers had to wait four hours for a dog team to arrive.

With Balou, there should be no waiting, he said.

Moore said the dog is trained to recognize 15 chemicals found in many common explosives, including dynamite, nitroglycerin and four types of gunpowder.

"As time goes on and we become more entwined as a team, we will add more odors," Moore

said.

Dogs are not trained to find both drugs and explosives because the scents can confuse them, he said.

Balou not only accompanies Moore at work, he also lives with the officer in Harrisville. The pair regularly spends time training and playing together.

To gain certification, Moore and the dog went through a Police Officer Standards and Training program that included more than 300 hours of training.

Moore said being a K-9 officer is fun, but also a lot of work.

"If we're not on calls, we can do training," he said.

Balou is a driven dog, who is al-

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Dog

From 1B

ways anxious to get moving and get to work, Moore said. He is also calm in crowds and around strangers.

"That's what we need on campus," he said. "A dog that can interact with people."

LeBlanc said the department has wanted to start a K-9 unit for some time, but only recently got the necessary funding.

The dog, worth about \$7,000, was donated by Roger Miller, of Miller Kennels in Marriott-Slaterville, and \$10,000 for training and equipment was donated by the Willard L. Eccles Charitable Foundation.

Without the donations, the K-9 program would not have been possible, LeBlanc said.

Stephen Denkers, of the Willard L. Eccles Charitable Foundation, said Balou will play an important role for

the department.

"A need presented itself and we felt we could fill that void," he said.

Miller, a seasoned detection-dog trainer, said Balou ended up in his kennel after going through five different owners.

"I looked at him and thought he would be a good detection dog," Miller said.

He said he helped Balou in his early training, teaching him how to respond while working in different environments and in different kinds of weather.

Miller said once Balou is trained for patrol work, he will also be a great help to the department.

"It's different when there is a dog, instead of an officer by himself," he said. "With a dog it's a big deterrent for criminals."

LeBlanc said Moore and Balou are planning to eventually get national certification.

"We want to keep our K-9 program as a premier professional program," LeBlanc said.