



# Buying a Personal Protection Dog

---



# About the Author

---

## **Jerry Bradshaw**

Training Director, Tarheel Canine



Jerry Bradshaw, CEO of Tarheel Canine, grew up in Monticello, New York. He excelled in school and graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in Economics. He pursued further studies at the University of North Carolina, intending to become a professor. However, a home invasion incident prompted him to get a dog for security. This led to his passion for dog training and involvement in obedience classes. Jerry eventually acquired a Belgian Malinois named Arrow and joined the Raleigh Schutzhund association, achieving success in Schutzhund competitions. He trained several exceptional dogs, including Rocky and Ricardo, both reaching the highest level in the PSA sport. In 1994, Jerry founded Tarheel Canine with partner Lee Justice, which grew into a prominent police K9 business. Jerry and his team have been recognized in various publications and media outlets, and he is actively involved in protection dog sports and police dog certifications.



BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

# Introduction

Personal security is a hot issue in America: everyone from executives needing close protection details with the ability to do explosives detection sweeps, to families who just want an extra measure of security, personal protection dogs are finding their way into homes all across America. There are literally hundreds of vendors, breeders and trainers selling dogs to the public. This free e-book is intended to help consumers sort fact from fiction and provide a basic guide to buying a personal protection dog.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

### **What is the difference between a Police K9 and a Personal Protection Dog?**

Simply put, the main difference is offense and defense. Police dogs are utilized in an offensive manner primarily. Searching for drugs, searching for bombs, searching for offenders through tracking and trailing, area searches or building searches are examples of an offensive tool. The officer is using the dog proactively. On the flip side of the same coin, the same police dog may provide handler protection and therefore is also capable of being defensive in nature.

Looking at a personal protection dog, however, you see that they are mainly used in a defensive manner. Protecting your person and your home is their reason for being.

Whatever the dog's capability, it is unlikely he will be unleashed to search for and apprehend a bad guy. More likely he will alert you to someone's presence, perform an aggressive display to keep someone from approaching you, and act as a great deterrent. He may even engage an attacker, if needed. These are all defensive acts. Where there is a great similarity though, is that both dogs are expendable. If it comes down to their life or yours, your child's life or theirs, they can be used to prolong your life, by giving you time to escape to safety, or draw a weapon to use deadly force. These dogs are there for us, to give their lives for ours if necessary.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

# What is the best breed for a PPD dog?

Proper testing of canine candidates and evaluation of your situation is the best way to find a good dog for personal protection rather than relying on breed as a guide. That being said, the best type of dog is generally a German Shepherd Dog (GSD). Other breeds work, but just don't have as deep of a gene pool to provide the strong nerves, the proper balance of prey and defense, the ability to turn on and off, and the social nature of the GSD. For a majority of our clients we recommend the GSD for those reasons. At Tarheel Canine, we will search out other breeds if needed to satisfy a client, but we prefer to steer the client to the trusted, and tried, and true dog for personal security. The majority of the police dogs in the US come from European breeding of GSDs or the Belgian Malinois. Belgian Malinois can be used for personal protection, but they are very high energy and require a very active family that has experience with working dogs. Our approach is not to try and fix something that isn't broken by using breeds that aren't commonly up to the task.

Many people see dogs on TV being employed as protection dogs, and there are other breeds that can do the task but finding dogs with the combination of traits needed to fit well into a family home, be around children safely, yet still possess the ability to defend the family is very difficult. Often times sub-par dogs are passed off as protection dogs by either incompetent trainers or by vendors trying to satisfy an insistent client. Many breeds such as the Doberman, Rottweiler, and others can be up to the task, but it is much more difficult to locate good specimens that will be good protection dogs.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

### **I already have a dog, can't I just get him trained as a PPD?**

The good news is that you can, if your dog has a strong social nature and has the temperament qualities and drive that will allow the dog to be trained. The odds are better if the dog comes from a working line of breeding. You can have your selected trainer look at your candidate and do a series of tests to see if he has what it takes to do the job. Remember, though, not every person has the temperament to be a police officer, and not every horse can be a winning racehorse. Not every dog can be a personal protector. Some dogs are great pets, but are not cut out for protection work. A couple of disqualifiers are dogs that are not socially confident such that they give a flight response when confronted by a threat, or dogs that are aggressive but do not have the confidence to stay in a fight with an attacker. A qualified trainer should be able to tell you if your dog has the ability to be trained.

Please be aware that there is no set standard for what a dog has to do, other than protect. In some situations that may be only barking to scare someone away. However, what we consider to be a PPD, will actually bark and then back it up. If the dog is incapable of that, then he is more of a companion dog. He is a buddy that may alert you to trouble, but he wants to get away faster than a speeding bullet, instead of protecting you. Also, beware the trainer that has a multi leveled program (level 1,2,3 dogs) all at ever increasing prices. The dog either will protect you in real life situations or he won't when all is said and done. If the dog has another skill, such as explosives detection, or is a titled dog with a special pedigree, that will surely increase the cost of the dog. Make sure you do your research when searching out someone to help with this process. It very well may be easier to focus on socializing a purchased dog with your other house dog than to have your house dog try and perform tasks that he is unable to execute comfortably. You want a trainer that will give you a truthful answer about what your dog can do.



## Can I train a dog for PP myself?

You cannot train the dog by yourself. A properly trained decoy (or agitator) is needed to teach the dog how to respond to threats. You do not want to be the one (or anyone in your family for that matter) to threaten the dog, you are his partner, and part of his pack.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

### **How do I keep my PPD from forgetting his training?**

Keeping up your dog's obedience is easiest when you incorporate it in to your everyday life. Consistently enforcing all of your commands and providing clear expectations for your dog will keep them proficient. Making your dog "heel" when you go for your walks will keep his leash manners fresh. Requiring him to hold a "place" command or a "down-stay" while your family eats dinner will encourage his stays. Making him work to earn his dinner, toys, and even attention will keep him reminded that his manners are the way to his rewards. How much bite-work maintenance training a dog will need to prevent becoming complacent in the home varies with each individual dog. Some dogs will need monthly training while others can go a few months at a time not biting without any issues. We recommend that you find a good training club in your area that will fit your training plan and your schedule to practice his skills. Your trainer should be able to help you find a club that matches your dog's training style. We also recommend asking your decoy to stage break-in scenarios to remind your dog to stay alert in the home. If you don't have an experienced decoy readily available you can also set up exercises to have a "stranger" come to your house to practice your dog's alert. Your dog gets the opportunity to "scare" off a stranger with his bark. As you get to know your PPD, your family and your trainer can figure out a schedule that works best. Many people find that they really enjoy training with their dog and choose to practice a good bit more than the minimum. You may be far away from your vendor geographically, so coming to your vendor's facility may not be possible for follow up training. Your chosen vendor should be able to guide you to trainers around the country who are qualified to assist you with your maintenance training. At Tarheel Canine we have a worldwide network of former students running their own business who are familiar with our training methods who can assist in the maintenance of your PPD.





## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

### **Who can care for my PPD when the family is all away?**

It is okay for your PPD to have a circle of trusted friends or family that can assist you in the care of your canine. If your PPD is not particularly social with outsiders or if all of those people are away with you it is a good idea to have a professional boarding or training kennel or even your dog's veterinarian available for this situation. Be sure to have the details worked out before it's needed so that you don't have to arrange it on very short notice. Most PPDs are perfectly fine with being boarded and handled by kennel technicians but if not there are facilities with indoor and outdoor runs that never have to actually touch your dog in order to care for him. It is important that the staff of these facilities is briefed on the proper handling of your dog. Don't hesitate to be specific in your expectations of your dog's handling.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

### **I have kids/other dogs, doesn't that make it unsafe for me to have a PPD?**

There is no reason why you can't welcome a PPD into a home with children of all ages or other dogs. Before picking out your new PPD it is important that you first discuss these issues with your selected trainer, so they can have a conversation with you about what dog will fit best into your particular situation. Be sure to tell them of your family situation including children and other pets in the home. Those are important characteristics that need to be looked at when choosing a dog. It is often easier if you pick the opposite sex of your current dog, but your trainer will also take into account whether your new dog or current dog is or will be spayed or neutered. The age of your children will also affect the personality of the dog that you will want to choose. Assuming the right dog is chosen, your trainer should work closely with you to help you introduce your PPD into your family effectively. Take care not to rush kids or pets in this transition period. Before the dog's arrival you should remind your kids of proper dog etiquette. What we see on most deliveries is that the children are the first ones our PPDs bond to and they become protective over them almost immediately. Just remember that introducing a new member to the family is stressful for everyone but you can do things to make it easier for everybody. Children and dogs should always be carefully supervised.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

### **Do I have to notify my homeowner's insurance company if I have a PPD?**

Different home owner's insurance companies have different rules regarding dogs or trained dogs.

You will want to consult your insurance company directly prior to purchase to find out their

specific guidelines. Most require that they be notified of pets to ensure that you are covered.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

### **Why is a personal protection dog better than a dog that just barks at intruders/strangers?**

The reason a Personal Protection Dog (PPD) is better than a dog that just barks at strangers is that your PPD can defend against an intruder by biting and holding them long enough for you to escape the threat, run to a neighbor, or otherwise get away from harm. Then you can call the Police Department for help. A dog that just barks at a stranger or intruder doesn't have the appropriate threshold of defense drive to bite the suspect and stay in the fight and can actually be a distraction in a real encounter.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

### **What should I look for in the vendor/breeder/trainer of a Personal Protection Dog?**

You should look into the breeder/trainer for a reputable and reliable product. Request a reference list of the clients that have purchased PPD's from the breeder/trainer. Remember, these are people who value their privacy, so a couple of recent references with email addresses should be sufficient. Ask them how the service was overall. Ask them how the dog integrated into their home and what kind of instruction program was provided. You want to make sure that the vendor doesn't just drop off a dog to you with a video, or worse simply ship the dog to you directly from Europe! You need hands on instruction and a chance to practice his obedience commands so that you can be familiar and fluid in their use, as well as in controlling the dog. For the performance side of the dog, the breeder/trainer should show the PPD that you are considering purchasing, to be able to bite a hidden sleeve (not a big visible sleeve), and have the obedience to be controlled on and off leash around various distractions such as kids and other animals.

When you place the order for the dog, the dog may be unfinished in training. Upon delivery you should see that the dog is well trained and controllable, and in the protection work that the dog will be able to become aggressive on command with a passive assailant wearing no equipment, as well as making an apprehension on a person wearing a hidden sleeve. This demonstrates that the dog will assuredly engage a threat and not be just a dog that bites equipment.

Many PPD customers get roped into buying a Schutzhund titled dog or other trained dog that only is used to biting visible equipment. Your vendor should assure you that your finished PPD is going to be trained to a standard that would protect you from a real threat. Dogs trained only to bite visible equipment are a good place to start but the dog must be trained to a level where visible equipment is not a necessary cue to engage an assailant.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

### **I have seen PPD dogs priced anywhere from \$5k-\$65k... what is the difference?**

The difference between the PPD dogs ranging from 5k-65k is not just the price. A lot of PPD vendors are putting out unreliable products and taking advantage of people that don't know exactly what they are looking for. Some vendors use the "if it costs more it must be better" marketing strategy to hook clients. Many PPD purchasers are wealthy but ignorant of the market for canines.

At Tarheel Canine, our PPDs perform the same tasks and more than a 65k dog would, but better. We strive to put out a reliable product just like our Police K9s we sell to Police Departments for a considerably more reasonable price than our competitors. I make this argument against the outrageously priced dogs: Particular extra skills may cost extra money (like explosives detection skills), but no personal protection dog should cost more than a police dog with similar training. The most expensive police dog is a fully trained explosives/patrol and tracking dog which costs at most around \$16,000. There is absolutely no reason a dog with less training (protection only) should cost more than this special K9. We go above and beyond to make sure the dog you select is going to be suitable for your needs. We make sure your PPD is fine around the everyday encounters such as kids running up to your dog to pet it, or holding a down-stay while you go get the mail. Whatever your daily lifestyle is, we can provide a dog to suit your requests.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

### **What guarantees should come with a PPD?**

First and foremost your vendor should provide a **compatibility guarantee**. If you don't feel in your gut a good relationship with the dog, or feel like there is a problem with compatibility, call your trainers right away. Dogs are living breathing beings with personalities and they need to be communicated with properly and clearly. Many times issues that come up with the newly delivered dog are miscommunications, and the trainer can fairly easily steer you back on the right path. But if it is more than a communication issue, if you feel that the dog just isn't a good fit, if you or your family are afraid of the dog, or if he shows aggression to anyone, your trainer should be willing to make an accommodation after a consultation. All of our PPDs at Tarheel Canine come with a compatibility guarantee.

You should also get a comprehensive health guarantee. There should be a guarantee against any congenital (from birth) health problems. All our Tarheel Canine PPDs come with a 2 year congenital health guarantee. That is in general 1 year longer than the industry standard.



## BUYING A PERSONAL PROTECTION DOG

---

# How should the purchase process work?

When choosing a vendor you should expect that they will ask you a lot of questions, and be willing to answer all of your questions and take the time needed to allay any of your fears or concerns. You should feel a relationship building through the process of speaking with the trainer. If you don't want a biting dog, they should be able to accommodate you with a companion dog with a bark alert, to provide a deterrent. However, as I say to my clients, buying a companion dog is like having a gun with no bullets. You don't want to regret not having a fully trained personal protection dog at the very moment you need his protective abilities to save you or your family from danger. If you need a PPD with extra skills such as narcotics detection or explosives detection, inquire with the vendor about what you need.

At Tarheel Canine we encourage you to call and ask us about our protection dogs. If you order a dog from Tarheel Canine, you will have an in depth conversation with the head trainer, Jerry Bradshaw, about your family situation, and any specific concerns you may have about your situation. Then he will provide you with a contract detailing the guarantees, costs, and agreements in the purchase process. You will be provided with references and some pictures with some recently imported dogs so you can get a feel for the "type" of dog you may want. Once you decide to proceed, an executed contract and a 50% deposit are collected and the search process begins for your special dog.

While we concentrate on picking a dog with a stable temperament, for the price you are paying you should be able to get a handsome dog, and have some say about preferences of coat type and color. While coat, color, and size are part of the decision process, you should also trust your trainer to select the right dog for you, with the right temperament for the job he will do for you. When the dog is imported, we will provide you with some more pictures and videos of your dog during training so you can see his progress before the dog is delivered. A few weeks prior to the training being complete we will discuss a delivery date and set up the in home delivery. Two trainers will bring your dog to you, and spend 2 days of intensive instruction and integration of the dog into your family. The trainers will leave when you feel confident in your understanding of your dog's commands. Our trainers with whom you worked at your home will be available by phone to discuss any questions or concerns once the dog is dropped off.







# Buying a Personal Protection Dog

We hope this e-book has helped your understanding of the issues involved in purchasing a personal protection dog; reputation of the trainer, reasonable pricing, clear and ongoing communication, solid guarantees and a track record of success should steer you to Tarheel Canine for your personal protection dog.

Jerry Bradshaw

919-774-4152

[jbradshaw@tarheelcanine.com](mailto:jbradshaw@tarheelcanine.com)



TarheelCanine.com