

Lt. Sadoff and Officer Helms, I've noted my observations working K9 Canto for approximately 14 months. Although it may seem negative, I have found that K9 Canto body language and behavior continues to get better with consistent training and time.

In August of 2020, I was assigned K9 Canto as my replacement K9 partner. K9 Canto came from a previous handler, Officer John Grohman. It was my understanding that Officer Grohman had volunteered and accepted a military assignment to be deployed for a duration of approximately 14 months or more. He was not able to continue his assignment as a new member, canine handler for the Melbourne Police Department canine unit. His deployment would come at a time when my previous K9 partner, Caesar was being retired at the completion of six years of service. I was scheduled for a new k9 replacement at the end of the year, however, K9 Canto did not have a handler, therefore, it was decided by Lieutenant Sadoff that I would work K9 Canto for the remainder of my career.

When I took possession of K9 Canto, it was clear that working Canto would be a huge task. I quickly noticed that K9 Canto displayed skittish behavior, lack of motivation and confidence during non-stressful training scenarios. All of which concerned me. K9 Canto previously had 800 hours of training, two canine schools with two different handlers and should have had a great deal of confidence due to Canto's extended training. I believe with that amount of training, K9 Canto should have had more confidence and skill. It should be noted that I never saw any of these behaviors while instructing Officer Grohman and K9 Canto during a 160 hour drug school, which I instructed. In my experience, confidence comes from the handler working with a dog that clearly understands the commands. I have been a K9 handler for 17 years and K9 Canto is my fourth k9 partner assigned to me, through my extensive training and experience many of K9 Canto's behaviors would be questioned throughout an abbreviated FDLE Basic canine school.

When I initially picked up K9 Canto from Officer Grohman, I visually inspected K9 Canto and found two small sores underneath its neck where a remote trainer (e-collar) had been placed. It was apparent that K9 Canto had been wearing an e-collar for long periods of time in order to sustain such marks. I wondered if the e-collar was used to suppress a barking issue. I

believe that Officer Groham took upon himself to use an e-collar on a regular basis for many training scenarios. The fact that K9 Canto displayed many behaviors of control in a fearful way and not being confident. Officer Groham had to have utilized the e-collar even when being fed at home. Many times K9 Canto displayed a fearful behavior inside of the kennel. I would approach the kennel with food in hand and K9 Canto would stand away from me as far possible. Avoiding my presence until the dog bowl was left on the floor and I closed the kennel door. This is a behavior of control possibly shaped by an e-collar. As an experienced handler, an e-collar can be utilized to shape a dogs behavior in a positive or negative way. K9 Canto was showing me questionable (negative) behaviors during my eight weeks of training in patrol school and drug school. K9 Canto was skittish around people, different environments, objects and structures, causing K9 Canto to be hyper sensitive to everything surrounding us. Instructor, Officer David Helms and Lt. Sadoff were quickly made aware of these issues. They too witnessed some of the behaviors.

During the K9 School, K9 Canto would not take lead in front of me when actively searching for drugs. While being placed into a patrol car, many times K9 Canto would stand on the opposite side of the car kennel attempting to create more distance between us and wouldn't drink water from his bowl in front of me. This behavior seem as if K9 Canto had been controlled with an e-collar not to approach and drink at the water bowl until the door was closed. Many times K9 Canto feared me and those around me. All of these behaviors indicated a lack of trust and having fear. Again, it is my belief K9 Canto's behavior was shaped and conditioned with an e-collar to work with constant fear and no confidence. It is my belief that Officer Groham used an e-collar in the worst way to train K9 Canto on a day to day basis. K9 Canto's fearful behavior constantly surfaced during training. K9 Canto also feared trash cans and water hoses when present. It was suspected that K9 Canto experienced some type of correction with those items in the past. To prove my theory, I never placed an e-collar around Canto's neck. I always encouraged K9 Canto to lead, with positive re-enforcement and no physical compulsion. K9 Canto began to show steady improvement over the next several months of working with him. By receiving clear commands and good direction over the last 14 month I've been able to improve K9 Canto's confidence in all of the training areas. I maintained consistent training and

building confidence every step of the way. I saved K9 Canto's career and progress is being made on a day to day basis. It is my belief that K9 Canto is best worked with an experienced handler from this time moving forward.