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MURRAY (ABC4 News) - After several publicized dog shootings by police officers in Utah, the state's Peace Officer Standards and Training Council has approved a new mandatory training course on dog encounters.

In the past year, ABC4 Utah News has covered the killings of "Geist", a Weimaraner shot by a Salt Lake City Police officer, "Otis", a labrador retriever shot by a Salt Lake Unified Police officer and "Patches", a pit bull shot by a Tooele Police officer.

This new course features video and classroom instruction for all cadets in five different areas including:

"Identifying The Problem", "Assessing The Situation" and "Canine Body Language".

Lieutenant Wade Breur of POST told ABC4 Utah News how officers will learn how to avoid dog attacks.

"A lot of time officers want to face a person, you know you and I want to face each other when we're talking to each other," Lt. Breur said. "But dogs see that as a threat so if you just kind of blade away from the dog, don't look him in the eye then that will help the dog be at ease."

There's also instruction in "Legal Considerations" and "Use of Force Considerations".

"When force is used, use the best possible option that's out there," Lt. Breur said. "We even talk about using the non-lethal options such as pepper spray, some kind of a baton, a clipboard to defer the dog, distraction even by carrying some dog treats around and throwing some dog treats off to the side. That's covered in this curriculum as well."

Deeann Shepherd of the Humane Society of Utah says dog owners need to do their part as well, like put dogs inside when officers are nearby.

"You might think he's the most perfect pet," Shepherd said. "When he's in a scared situation you never know how he may react and it's the same situation for an officer. The adrenaline's going. We just want to make sure they practice

using non-lethal forms and I don't think we can solve every situation that may come up but I think we can improve it with this training."

The new training is only 2 hours out of an 11 week program but officers may receive additional dog encounter training from their individual agencies as well. The new POST course goes into effect July 1st.