

# POLICE K-9 UNITS RECEIVE PROTECTION IN COURT

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We are happy to report that South Carolina has a new law that provides police canine units some protection in court. Until this year, South Carolina had a strict liability statute for dog bites that meant criminal suspects could almost certainly collect a settlement if a police dog bit them, regardless of the situation.

The new law adds an exception for certified police dogs that are on duty and responding to a lawful command or otherwise acting according to their training. In no circumstance, however, is the dog or its handler allowed to use excessive force. In every scenario, the canine and its handler must follow departmental policy. The question of whether or not a situation was handled properly can now be determined by a court, instead merely issuing settlement after settlement.

**Had this legislation not passed, law enforcement agencies in South Carolina would likely have been forced to stop using police canines altogether. Thankfully, certified police canines will be able to continue working and help protect our communities.**