

A [New York police officer](#) stopped John Johnson, not his real name, for a traffic violation in an industrial community. Everything went ok for a few moments as Johnson exited his vehicle when asked. He handed over his documentation, and the cop did not seem concerned about violence. The police told Johnson to stay there while he turned to his squad car to "check something."

Johnson remembered he had unresolved felony warrants and fled. Two hours later, Johnson was still hiding.

Law enforcement didn't forget Johnson. They brought out 17 officers, a helicopter, and 3 K9 units to the scene; all sought out Johnson, a traffic violator.

Johnson heard a yell, but couldn't understand what was said. The next thing he knew, a German Shepherd clamped its jaws on Johnson's arms and dragged him from his hiding place. The pain was over-the-top, and Johnson seized a pipe and flailed at the animal in self-defense.

The dog's trainer, who had been out of sight, appeared and kicked Johnson several times and ordered the dog to release. The dog released Johnson who had deep lacerations and an arm which was almost severed.

Excessive force? A jury found for Johnson. It was true he had felony warrants, but at the time law enforcement didn't know the type of warrants — they might have been for nonviolent crimes. The specific transgression for which Johnson was held was a traffic violation.

What are the edicts when it comes to law enforcement's utilization of dogs to chase and capture suspects? Do police dogs cross the line from law enforcement to excessive force.

Being bitten or chased by a ferocious dog can be frightening.

It's not any less terrifying if the dog happens to be used by cops. Meeting a K9 police dog often results in injuries and trauma — even death.

If a person is mauled by a [K9 cop](#), they may have a legal case.

Can Police Use Dogs?

Under some circumstances it is legal. [Some Las Vegas lawyers](#) say that in Las Vegas, the animals are considered to be a "multi-functional asset." Cops are allowed to use them in a variety of actions including drug searches and apprehensions.

In Los Angeles, the LAPD K9 squad has 22 canines of a variety of types. Two tracking bloodhounds, four gun discovery canines, and 16 service animals. The squad also has Belgium Malinois, Dutch Shepherds, and German Shepherds.

According to a 2006 Florida police study, Belgium Malinois have higher bite rates than German Shepherds and agencies such as LAPD experience unacceptably high bite rations with some canine officers exceeding 80-percent. The study, published in Police Practice and Research (September 2006) and titled "Barks or Bites? The Impact of Training on Police Canine Force Outcomes," concluded that "bite and hold" is less damaging than "bark and hold."

Regardless, for all their help, police dogs are deadly and are considered lethal weapons.

Extreme Force?

Just as law enforcement can use excessive force, so can K9 dogs. If a police dog's behavior is unreasonable, the officer can be responsible for infringing the victim's [Fourth Amendment rights](#).

K9 force is unreasonable when the assault and ensuing injury is not supported by the governmental matter at stake

Every case is unique and has its realities and conditions.