

## Texas Game Wardens organize first-ever K9 Unit

For the first time in their history, Texas Game Wardens have a full-time, statewide canine team.

The first five canine handlers and dogs have graduated from an intense eight-week training program located at the world famous Utah POST canine facility in Salt Lake City. The second wave of canine handlers and dogs will attend the course in January 2014.

"The K9 program has been a long time coming, and we are extremely proud of our handlers for their hard work - an effort which resulted in a 100 percent pass rate," said Grahame Jones, Chief of Special Operations for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Law Enforcement Division. "In addition to excellent support from the department and the Parks and Wildlife Commission, we would like to thank the Travis County Sheriff's Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation for assisting during the planning phase."

Funding for the purchase of dogs and travel to and from Utah was provided by the TPW Foundation through a private donor. Utah Post provided the training at no cost with the exception of a minimal administrative fee, an amount also paid for by the private donor.

Depending on geographical location, the dogs will be used for various functions including detection of illegally taken or smuggled game and fish, search and rescue, cadaver search, and narcotics enforcement. "Most of the dogs will have dual functions such as wildlife detection and search and rescue," said Game Warden Capt. Kevin Davis, who oversees the canine program.

"I am gratified to assist Texas Game Wardens in their efforts to diminish the trafficking of contraband in their communities," said Sgt. Wendell Nope, Utah Post K9 Training Director. "I look forward to working with TPWD in the near future to further enhance the abilities of the canines and handlers in search and rescue situations."

"We cannot thank Utah Post enough for their partnership and professionalism," said Col. Craig Hunter, LE Division Director. "The department is extremely

excited to see the Texas Game Warden K9 team become a reality."

Check out a video news release about the new K9 unit on YouTube.

### Streamlined Texas Hunter Education Process Takes Effect

Beginning Thursday, September 19, hunters who need to complete the state's required hunter education will have expanded contemporary options designed to be more convenient, flexible and accessible.

Anyone born after Sept. 1, 1971, must successfully complete a hunter education training course or purchase a one-time deferral good for one license year in order to hunt legally in Texas. The certification is valid for life and is honored in all other states and provinces.

The new options for hunter education certification

*Big Cat! A.J. Jackson of Bronte shows off the 36 pound yellow cat (bigger than his son) he caught at Oak Creek Lake June 2.*

include a streamlined, one-day basic course and an option for anyone 17 years of age or older to take the hunting safety training completely online. The combination online home study and 4 to 5 hour skills field day course will still be offered, as well as advanced hunter education and in high school and college courses across the state.

The basic course will introduce and demonstrate skills focused on essential core competencies of safe, legal and ethical hunting.

Since mandatory hunter education first started in 1988, the number of hunting accidents and hunting fatalities has steadily declined to less than 3 per 100,000 hunters. Few accidents involved those who had completed hunter education.



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