March 23, 2017
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gunshots, knife wounds and drug overdoses are just a few of the risks K9s encounter

Local Vet to Train West Jordan Firefighters to Care for Police K9s

WEST JORDAN, Utah – Police Service Dogs from the West Jordan Police Department willingly rush into danger to keep people safe. So West Jordan Firefighters are taking some extra steps to make sure these highly trained members of the K9 unit stay safe too.

Experts from BluePearl Veterinary Partners, (formerly known as Utah Veterinary Center), are providing specialized training for West Jordan firefighters so they can provide the city's police service dogs with medical care. The training takes place Friday, March 24 at 2 p.m. at Fire Station 53, 7602 S. Jordan Landing Blvd. The media is invited to this unique training where paramedics and EMTs learn to transition their medical knowledge from humans to animals.

“These K9s play an important role in protecting our community,” said Firefighter Justin Young, who is also a member of the Police SWAT team. “They can become injured, dehydrated or even ingest poison when they're searching for narcotics. This training prepares us to evaluate and respond to their needs.”

Firefighters train regularly in a variety of disciplines, but providing medical care to animals has never been part of the curriculum. “Some aspects of emergency medical care are similar between an animal and a human, like hemorrhage control, and some are different simply because of differences in the anatomy,” said Young. “We are looking forward to learning new skills we can use to provide stabilizing medical care for our K9 partners.”

The West Jordan Police Department has three K9 officers and three dual-purpose Police Service Dogs that are trained to track and apprehend suspects as well as search for drugs. The K9s each have an officer they partner with on duty and also live with.

“We form a special bond with our K9 partners and rely on them to help keep us and the community safe when we are out on patrol and searching for narcotics,” said Tom Smith, an officer with the police K9 unit. “These dogs are not pets and don’t act like pets. They are valued members of the Police Department trained to do an important job.”
The K9s are highly trained and represent a significant investment. Initial K9 and handler basic training costs approximately $30,000. There are 320 hours of training for each discipline in which the dog receives training. West Jordan’s K9s are trained in apprehension and narcotics, which equates to 640 hours of training. They also undergo eight hours of additional training each week.

These K9s encounter many risks while on the job. BluePearl’s Dr. Jennifer Alterman will teach police and fire personnel to provide first aid to dogs who might suffer from snakebites, toxic substances, overheating, respiratory problems, wounds and more.

“The K9 dogs give so much to our community,” Alterman said. “They protect us every day and we are very happy to be able to provide this training so that we can help protect them.”

BluePearl, located in Midvale, is open 24/7 every day of the year, with veterinarians always on hand for emergencies. The hospital staff also includes veterinarians who have taken years of additional training and testing to become board-certified in specialties such as emergency and critical care, dentistry, oncology, ophthalmology, surgery and others.

For more information, contact Kim Wells, West Jordan public information officer, 801-618-9114 or kimw@wjordan.com or Curtis Krueger, BluePearl media specialist, 727-580-1813 or curtis.krueger@bluepearlvet.com.

###

About BluePearl Veterinary Partners
BluePearl Veterinary Partners is a national provider of emergency and specialty veterinary care. The rapidly growing company currently operates more than 60 hospitals in 21 states. BluePearl hospitals offer specialty care services such as cardiology, neurology and oncology, and most offer 24-hour emergency care. BluePearl’s clinicians use innovative procedures, high-tech equipment and the latest treatment methods to provide remarkable care for pets. BluePearl also participates in clinical trials to study the effectiveness of new drugs and treatments, providing access to cutting-edge medicine that is not yet commercially available. Learn more at bluepearlvet.com.