

Fundraiser aims to equip police dogs with vests

[Meredith May, Chronicle Staff Writer](#)

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Oakland Police Department

Cuda, of the Oakland Police Department, is one of many police dogs without a protective vest. Pet Express is donating proceeds from dog washes Saturday.

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There are 200 police dogs in the Bay Area, but only half of them have bulletproof vests.

The custom-fit vests are \$1,700 apiece and are too expensive for most beleaguered police department budgets.

Michael Levy, former police dog trainer and founder of the San Francisco-based Pet Food Express, will donate all the proceeds of in-store self-service dog washes this Saturday to the Western States Police Canine Association to buy vests for police dogs.

The fundraiser will be held at all 34 Pet Food Express stores, from Petaluma to Carmel.

"We're a local company, trying to help these brave dogs get the protection they deserve," Levy said.

The dogs often are the first to go into buildings looking for suspects, said Sgt. Bob Roberts, who oversees the seven-dog K9 unit for the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Department.

He has four dog vests, but there's no money in his budget to buy three more. Although none of his dogs has been shot, several have been attacked and beaten in the line of duty.

"That fraction of a second the suspect engages with the dog gives the officers a chance to survive," he said.

The dogs are a vital part of the force, he said, able to search a Costco-sized building in five minutes.

"It would take 10 officers an hour to do the same thing," he said.

E-mail Meredith May at mmay@sfnchronicle.com

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