

Base program keeps Shaw voters informed

By Airman 1st Class Susan Penning
Staff writer

Most people remember the old signs with Uncle Sam pointing his finger and declaring his need for new military recruits. But many service members forget he also still "wants them" to exercise their right to vote for America's future political leaders.

According to Maj. Jim Long, installation voting assistance officer at Shaw, voting aid is provided for military members and their families to ensure proper forms and information are provided, and no one is left in the dark about how to cast a vote in their state of residence.

Maj. Long said unit voting assistance counselors, also known as unit voting representatives, are appointed to help with specific needs.

"There is one unit voting representative for every 100 base personnel," he said. "Representatives receive formal training, are typically senior NCOs or first lieutenants and above, and are appointed by commanders."

In addition to the availability of unit voting representatives, new members at the First Term Airmen Center (and soon, Right Start) are now being briefed on how the voting process works for military personnel.

Many people may think they are automatically registered to vote when they enter the Air Force. According to Maj. Long, this is not the case.

"The best way to ensure you are registered to vote is by filling out a Standard Form 76, *Federal Post Card Registration and Absentee Ballot Request*. This will allow you to register and request an absentee ballot for your state of residence."

According to 1st Lt. Chris Rosales, a unit voting representative for the 20th Logistics Readiness Squadron, part of his job is to help military members and their families prepare the SF 76 for submission.

Maj. Long said an SF 76 should be completed by mid-September to ensure an absentee ballot makes it back to the member in time to meet voting deadlines.

Timeliness can especially be a factor for those deployed.

"Fortunately, there is a huge emphasis on helping members in the area of responsibility to submit their ballot information on time. Members preparing to deploy are given an opportunity to fill out an SF 76 beforehand and may have an absentee ballot sent directly to the AOR if an address can be provided," the major said.

No matter where the mission takes military members, they are encouraged to accept their responsibility as voting American citizens.

"As military members, we have sworn an oath to defend our democracy, but a democracy only survives if its citizens exercise their right to vote. We must not only defend our democracy on the battlefield, but also in the voting booth," said Lt. Rosales.

For more information on deployed voting or obtaining an SF 76, members should contact their unit voting representative or call **895-9288**.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Susan Penning

Shaw's voting assistance program assists members by providing forms and information.

Avoid summer heat hazards for pet safety

By Ms. Adriene M. Dicks
Correspondent

Some people treat their pets more like another family member than just an animal companion. They exercise with them, take them to run errands and on family trips. During the summer months, it may be necessary to change the activities family pets are included in to keep them safe from the impact of extreme temperatures.

According to Capt. (Dr.) Lisa Read, Fort Jackson Veterinary Services veterinarian, Columbia, S.C., extremely high temperatures are dangerous for animals in the same way they are dangerous for people.

"Animals suffer the same injuries and potential consequences as humans when exposed to extreme temperatures," said Dr. Read. "Heat-related illness-

es happen frequently in animals but especially to pets not used to the temperatures or unable to help themselves because they don't have access to shade, water or shelter."

People have the ability to dress for the weather. In the summer, people wear shorts, t-shirts and tank tops made of lightweight materials in order to feel more comfortable in higher temperatures and expose more skin helping to release more heat from the body. According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the only way dogs can rid themselves of heat is by heavy panting and a small amount of sweating through their paw pads.

Dr. Read suggests those who jog with their dogs alter their routines to ensure the safety of their pets. She advises dog owners to closely watch the behavior of their pets during exercise.

"If you want to take your dog jogging with you, exercise in the early morning or late evening. Make sure they have access to water. If your pet is unwilling to walk or run and is panting heavily, stop immediately and give them fresh water to drink and a shaded place to rest," said the veterinarian. "Dogs that become too hot during exercise will often cool off very well if given the opportunity to stand in a body of water for a few minutes. If that is not available, find a water hose and apply cool - not cold - water to their belly, armpits and groin area. This will help them cool down sufficiently."

Dr. Read said the normal body temperature of dogs and cats is 100 - 103 degrees Fahrenheit. When it begins to rise above 106, it can become dangerous and may cause internal changes that can result in death if it is not decreased to a normal level quickly.

"Our pets can't tell us their mouths are dry or they are starting to feel a little dizzy," said Dr. Read. "We have to be aware of the situation and provide all the preventable measures we can because we don't often know animals are suffering from heat stroke until it may be too late."

The most common signs of heat stroke in pets include heavy panting, lethargy, elevated temperatures, blood pressure abnormalities, coma and bleeding disorders.

The 20th Security Forces Squadron has taken measures to ensure Shaw's military working dogs stay healthy and comfortable during the extreme heat of South Carolina summers. According to Staff Sgt. Jemal Jones, 20th SFS military working dog section kennel master, the steps they have taken aid in the dogs' job performance.

"The temperature outside works on the dogs' stamina. They get tired quicker when it's hot and may stop searching," said Sgt. Jones. "Imagine that you have to wear a coat while working outside during the summer; that's what it's equivalent to. The health of these dogs is the biggest factor in them performing well."

The kennel that houses the military working dogs is air-conditioned in the summer and heated in the winter. The 20th SFS also has an air conditioned trailer for when the dogs must travel. This trailer holds ten dogs and has a generator that pushes cool air to each of the ten compartments. Also available for the dogs are K-9 cool vest which are packed with ice to cool them off after spending time in the heat. According to Sgt. Jones, another way to cool them off is by applying cool water directly to the skin.

"Sometimes after working in high temperatures, we cool off the dogs by applying water to their inner thighs," said Sgt. Jones. "There is less hair there so they cool off quicker. Also, a major vein located in that area helps carry the cooling affect to the rest of the body."

Whether working or playing, it is necessary for pet owners to limit the amount of time they allow pets to spend in the heat and direct sunlight and be aware of how high temperatures may affect them. For more information, log onto www.asPCA.org or call Shaw's Veterinary Services at 895-9552.



Photo by Adriene M. Dicks

Staff Sgt. Lorenzo Simmons, 20th SFS military working dogs handler, loads Zeus into the air-conditioned trailer.