

CANINE *from page 1A*

Deputy and Canine Officer Jackie Buccafurno stated.

The Belgium Malinois breed originated in Europe where the dogs were used on farms for the protection of livestock and families.

Sheriff's deputies Clarence Layne and Jackie Buccafurno, attended a four week training course at the Cross Creek Training Academy to learn to become canine handlers. The deputies had to learn the Dutch commands that the dogs were trained to follow in Holland prior to attending the training course.

Buccafurno has been in law enforcement and has trained dogs since 1975. She has worked as a canine handler for the sheriff's department for two years. Layne has worked as a patrolman for the Grand Saline Police Department, and as a jailer and deputy for the Van Zandt County Sheriff's office.

"The Belgium Malinois have more energy and stamina than a German Shepherd because they are more leaner and agile. Their coat is much thinner and sleeker to be able to withstand the heat—They will go a long time especially when it comes to sniffing drugs. Labs have a tendency to get burned out quicker," Buccafurno explained.

"These dogs are not only drug dogs but patrol dogs. They're actually built-in back up for our deputies."

"We've done something that helps not only our entire community but our bloodhound team. These dogs are also trained in tracking so if we have a lost child or we have a person that may have wandered off from the nursing home we don't always have to call the constable."

The dogs are trained in the

passive-alert technique, meaning that they will signal the officer if drugs are present by sitting or laying.

"This can be an emotional roller-coaster for the dog because we get them hyped up and yet they have to remain calm. There is less destruction and damage to equipment this way," said Buccafurno.

The dog trainers at Cross Creek Training Academy are certified police officers, not civilians. They are experienced canine officers who have worked in the trenches and know the training and canines needed for effective law enforcement. The academy ensures that each dog is matched to fit the personality of the handler.

The sheriff's office researched ten different academy's before choosing Cross Creek.

"We wanted dogs that were

extremely well trained on bite work, and we needed to be able to call them off promptly," said Buccafurno.

Buccafurno stated that the dogs are trained to sniff out eight different drugs including, marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine, crack, heroine, hash, LSD, and ecstasy, and are being trained on a prescription drug called oxycon.

Van Zandt County Sheriff R. P. "Pat" Burnett said that the dogs will be used in conjunction with the Department of Public Safety, the North East Texas Drug Task Force, and the constable's office.

"Having two canine units will allow us to have full-coverage on the streets—this will be a good marriage of a patrol and drugs and also the new drug task force," Van Zandt County Sheriff R.P. "Pat" Burnett commented.