

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-358](#), a report to the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD has used MWDs since World War II to assist and protect servicemembers at installations within the United States and at deployment sites worldwide. As of October 2016, about 1,800 MWDs were in service. The Air Force is responsible for procuring and assigning all MWDs for the military. The Army is responsible for the medical care of all military animals, including MWDs. Questions have been raised as to whether MWDs' experiences during deployment may result in conditions that pose future health challenges. Based on those questions, a House Report accompanying the proposed version of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 included a provision for GAO to assess end-of-service veterinary care for MWDs.

This report examines (1) how DOD tracks information about MWDs, and how many MWDs were adopted, transferred, or euthanized over the past 5 years (2011-2015); (2) prevalent medical conditions of adopted MWDs for 2014 and 2015; and (3) what assistance is available for individuals who adopt MWDs.

GAO obtained and analyzed data from the three systems used to track information on MWDs, observed system demonstrations, interviewed Air Force and Army officials, and reviewed related documentation. GAO also interviewed relevant nonprofit organizations that provide assistance to individuals who adopt MWDs.

DOD concurred with the report and provided technical comments, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-17-358](#). For more information, contact Debra A. Draper at (202) 512-7114 or draperd@gao.gov.

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

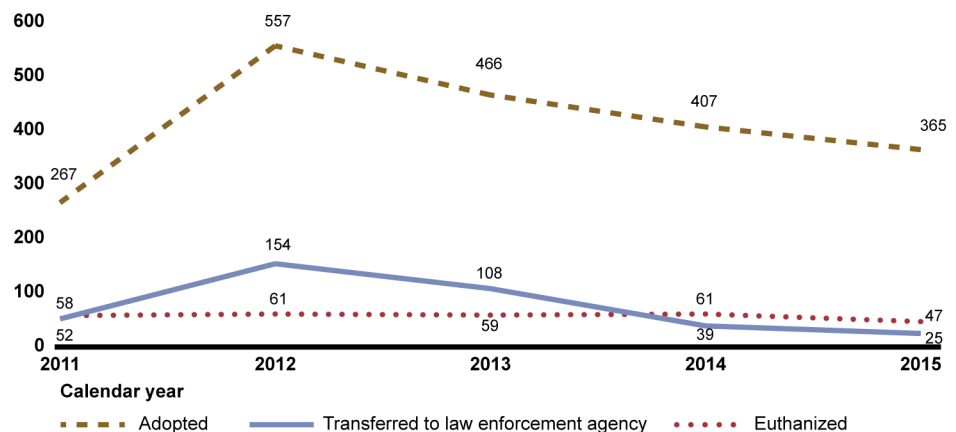
Medical Conditions and Care for End-of-Service Military Working Dogs

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) uses three systems to track information about Military Working Dogs (MWDs), including information related to their removal from service at which time they can be put up for adoption, transferred to a law enforcement agency, or euthanized for health or behavioral reasons. According to an Air Force official, the number of MWDs adopted or transferred over the past 5 years (2011 through 2015) varied based on changes in deployment needs. The number of euthanized MWDs varied to a lesser extent.

Number of Military Working Dogs (MWDs) Adopted, Transferred, or Euthanized from 2011 through 2015

Number of military working dogs



Sources: Working Dog Management System (WDMS), Central Repository, and 2011-2012 Military Working Dog Disposition Reports.
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Based on medical data available for 421 of 772 MWDs adopted during 2014 and 2015, GAO found that the most prevalent medical conditions included skin and dental issues. An Army veterinarian told GAO that these medical conditions are unlikely to result in MWDs' removal from service as these conditions generally can be treated or resolved. Other prevalent medical conditions, such as arthritis, are associated with musculoskeletal issues, which are more likely to result in MWDs' removal from service. The veterinarian told us these types of musculoskeletal issues are common in breeds maintained by the MWD program, which include Labrador Retrievers, Belgian Malinois, and German Shepherd dogs.

While owners of adopted MWDs are responsible for the costs of veterinary care, some assistance with these costs is available through nonprofit organizations, such as the U.S. War Dogs Association. Individuals with access to DOD medical care—such as active-duty servicemembers and their dependents—may also purchase care for their adopted MWDs at veterinary clinics located at military installations. However, the types of veterinary services vary by installation, and some installations do not offer any veterinary services.