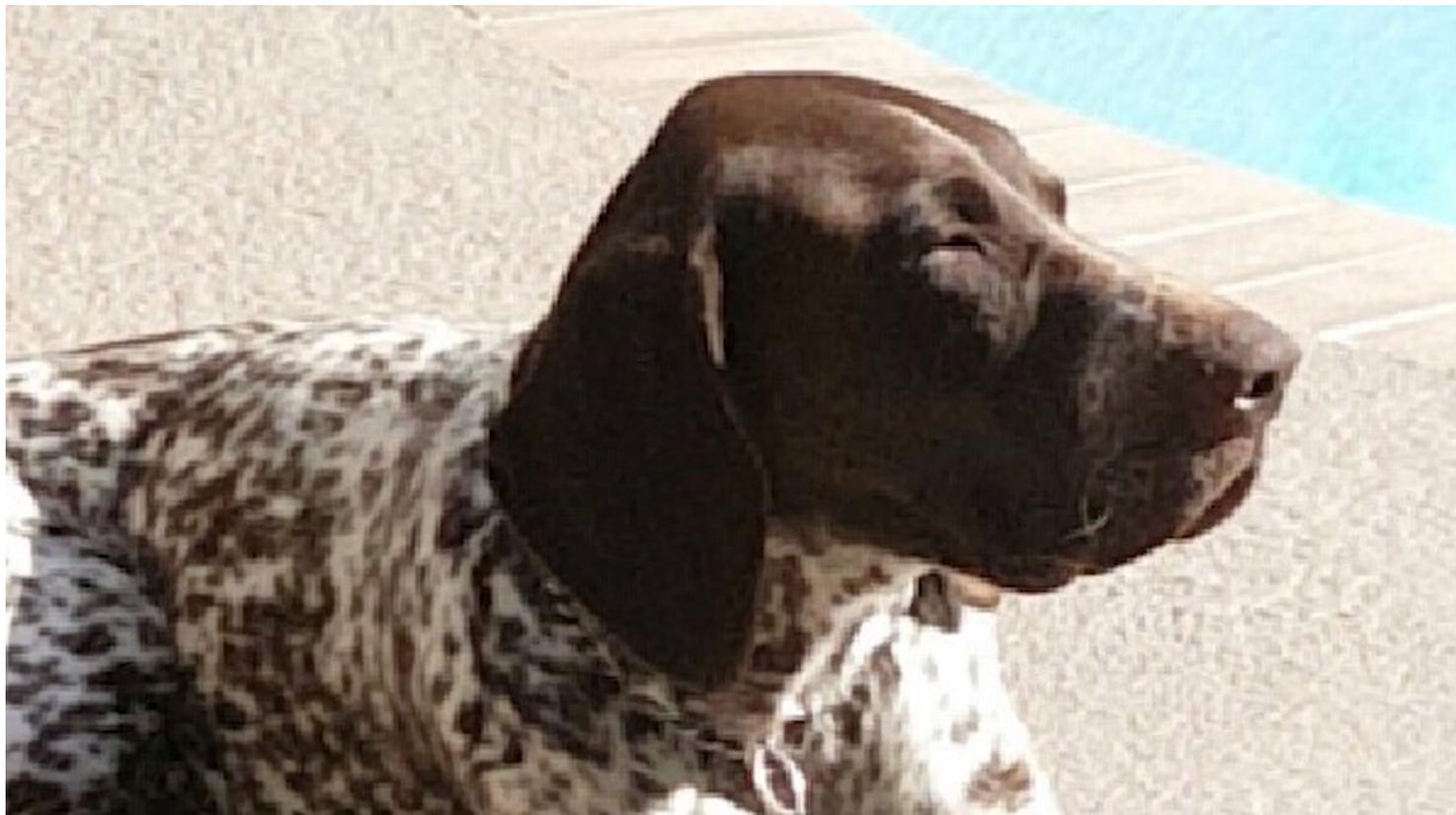


Whiff of powerful drug fentanyl sickens three Broward Sheriff's Office K-9s, officials say



Primus and two other K-9s, a German shorthaired pointer named Finn and a yellow Labrador retriever named Packer, were tasked with searching a house for drugs and money.



By **Rebeca Piccardo**
Sun Sentinel

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Broward Sheriff's Office K-9 required opioid antidote to recover from fentanyl exposure

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Moments after searching for drugs inside a house in Lauderhill, **Broward Sheriff's Office** K-9 handler Dustin Thompson noticed there was something wrong with one of his dogs.

and stopped moving. He had a blank stare and

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"He was in kind of a sedated state. He had a lack of energy," said Detective Andy Weiman, who trained Primus and was assisting his handler that day. "Primus is a pretty high-energy dog. He's very excitable. He would usually be standing or trying to jump out of the car."

Primus and two other K-9s who had been searching for hidden cash inside the same house were rushed to Coral Springs Animal Hospital on Oct. 27 after they showed signs of drug exposure and possible overdose, the sheriff's office said.

While the dogs were on the way to the clinic, other law enforcement agents continued searching the house and found a bag of drugs that authorities said tested positive for fentanyl, a dangerous synthetic opiate that is up to 50 times more potent than heroin, and up to 100 times stronger than morphine.

Fentanyl — and its even more potent derivative, carfentanil — pose a particular danger to paramedics and law enforcement, who run the risk of inhaling the drug simply by coming in contact with it while on duty. Even a very small amount can be lethal.

That morning, members of the sheriff's office Detection Canine Unit were assisting Lauderhill police, Drug Enforcement Agency and Homeland Security Investigations agents with an investigation into the sale of heroin and heroin laced with fentanyl, the sheriff's office said.

Primus and two other K-9s, a German shorthaired pointer named Finn and a yellow Labrador retriever named Packer, were tasked with searching a house for drugs and money. Merely getting a whiff of the drug was enough to sicken the dogs, the sheriff's office said.

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"It was believed that the supplier of the fentanyl had been arrested some weeks prior to the execution of the search," the sheriff's office said in an email. "Prior to the search, the sheriff's office was not aware of any obvious hazards to the handlers or canines."

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At the animal hospital, Primus was given fluids and a dose of naloxone, an antidote used to revive drug users from opiate overdoses. It is often known by its brand name, Narcan. Finn and Packer were given IV fluids to help them "metabolize the drugs," Weiman said.

All three dogs recovered quickly and were back on duty the next day, he said.

Weiman said he is even more wary of the hazards that handlers and K-9s can encounter with a drug such as fentanyl out on the streets.

"It seems as though it can be a danger to everybody," Weiman said. "It's a whole other level of precautions that you have to take [with this drug] so you don't become one of the victims."

rpiccardo@sun-sentinel.com, 954-356-4544 or Twitter @rebecapiccardo

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