

SWGDOG SC 3 – SELECTION OF SERVICEABLE DOGS

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APTITUDE AND TEMPERAMENT

1. Evaluating potential detector dogs

When submitting a dog for evaluation, the supplier could provide the documentation in paragraph 1.4 below to allow the evaluator to carry out a basic assessment of the medical history. It is normal for a full veterinarian test to be carried out on completion of a successful evaluation.

- 1.1 Due to the importance of the initial selection evaluations, they should only be carried out by a competent evaluator.
- 1.2 It is considered a best practice to conduct business with suppliers equitably, fairly and according to appropriate legal and contractual agreements.
- 1.3 During evaluation it is considered a best practice to care for all dogs in the same manner as privately-owned dogs.
- 1.4 Before carrying out a temperament and evaluation test, the dog's basic medical condition and physical health could be assessed to eliminate those animals which are fundamentally unsuitable for the task. This assessment should include hip and elbow x-rays and current vaccination records. Acceptance of a dog should normally be on a 30 day return policy from arrival at the training center.

2. Definition

- 2.1 A potential detector dog is one that is untrained on any specific odor and the evaluation is designed to establish that the dog has the essential behaviors and temperament to be a successful detection dog.

3. Temperament Standards

- 3.1 A primary consideration in selecting a detector dog is that it should have the suitable temperament for the role. A potential detector dog should be even tempered and demonstrate a confident outgoing investigative attitude. The temperament is in direct connection and control of the intent, motivation, attitude, performance, response and reaction.
- 3.2 Example of temperament flaws include: a variety of fears, poor past experiences from which the dog has not recovered, unwarranted aggression or shyness; an over or

under reaction to external stimuli. Dogs must be able to tolerate a variety of work conditions appropriate to the task.

4. Evaluation Methods

- 4.1 In general, evaluation of adult dogs should take place between 12 and 36 months of age because this is when dogs are normally behaviorally and socially mature.
- 4.2 Evaluation should be conducted by the buyer or their representative and be carried out in an environment unfamiliar to the dog, but indicative of the type where the dog will be operating after training. The supplier should not normally be present during the evaluation.

5. Environmental soundness evaluation

- 5.1 The environmental soundness evaluation is designed to assess the dog's normal reactions to commonly encountered environments. It looks for confidence in all these areas or that the dog after one or two exposures will start to demonstrate marked improved confidence. The evaluation also is looking for independence and continuity of focus without constant handler reinforcement so demonstrating levels of concentration.

The dog should be walked through an environmental conditioning area which will contain different examples of flooring and footing (carpet, wood, ceramic etc), open and closed stairs, temperatures, light values (from bright light to totally dark), open and confined areas, with and without obstacles, and various noise distracters.

6. Search and retrieve/food drive evaluation

- 6.1 This evaluation is to assess the dog's ability to hunt and its retrieve/food drive in different environmental conditions. An example of this might be:

Throwing a reward item for recovery on grass, solid wood floor, steel decking, open stairs. Where the throws are indoors, the evaluations are done in full light to complete darkness. The dog should also be evaluated where the evaluator carries out a fake throw where the dog thinks that the item has been thrown when it has not. This evaluates the hunt drive. A further evaluation of the hunt drive should be outside where the item is thrown into long grass and also both upwind and downwind. The evaluator should be assessing the dog's change in behavior when the dog can see the reward and is able to anticipate the hunt, the speed with which the dog goes out for the reward

as well as the speed of approach and of the strike (pick up). The dog should be assessed for its determination to retain the reward after recovery.

This evaluation is the measurement of the dog's need, drive and desire to obtain its reward in the variable conditions. The dog's performance is graded on the intensity to obtain the reward (speed and possession; persistence to obtain the reward).

7. Sociability Evaluation

7.1 The purpose of this evaluation is to study the dog's reaction to people, dogs and other animals as appropriate. It is to assess abnormal aggression, submission, fear and potential for distraction.

7.2 This evaluation should be done with and without the dog's expected detection reward (ball, Kong, towel, food).

7.3 An example of an evaluation could be:

The dog is led by its handler through a minimum of two people. The dog should move between the people without overt response, without showing avoidance-behavior or aggression. Curious sniffing is evaluated as a completely natural social behavior and therefore is considered as harmless as ignoring of the passive person group. An excessive avoidance behavior and an excessive aggressive response have to be judged as negative.

The evaluation should be then repeated to assess the dog's ability to recover its primary reward (ball, Kong, towel, food) in and around the people. The reward should be thrown near them and the evaluation will assess the dog's ability not to be distracted by those standing round the reward.

8. Tracking Evaluation

- 8.1 This test determines whether or not the dog has any natural tracking ability or any previous training. It measures his desire/ability to use his nose, his interest level, his desire to pursue the track and his tenacity to stay with it to the end.

An example of the evaluation could be:

The track would be laid in an open field free from distractions and with grass up to six inches in height. The quarry will walk in a straight line, downwind, for approximately 200 feet, lay a ball at the end and return to the start, double laying it. The track can be marked by scuffing it but the handler must know where the track is. It is then aged for 10 minutes. The dog is cast over the track without encouragement to see if he will indicate and pursue it on his own. If he does not then some direction can be given. Once he has indicated the track, observe his level of interest, if he stays with it or distracts and if he is happy working the track. This test is merely a measure of what there is to work with and is not a pass/fail situation.

9. Desirable evaluation outcomes

- 9.1 Desirable outcomes may include but are not limited to:

Stable and outgoing in any environment

Should have an excellent retrieve/hunt drive on a thrown or hidden object.

Concentration and maintenance of focus over time with the dog's attention on the object, regardless of area and other distractions.

The dog should maintain strong drive throughout the entire evaluation

The dog should demonstrate independent sniffing behavior

The dog should demonstrate independent searching behavior

10. Undesirable evaluation outcomes

- 10.1 Undesirable outcomes may include but are not limited to :

Dog chases but does not search for the object

Will not search/hunt for the object

Gives up the search easily

Will not chase a moving object

Chases but leaves for distractions, such as animal contamination - i.e. urine/feces – other people or casual items in area - i.e. piece of paper on ground

Distracted/overwhelmed by the environmental conditions

Behaves in a shy manner

Behaves in a nervous manner

Behaves in an overly aggressive manner

Fail to search

Fail to hunt for the odor/object

Fail to find the odor/object.

Show a lack of search intensity.

Show a lack of stamina

Diminishing interest in the reward during the evaluation

Over-aggressive dogs that are unable to work around people

Over-aggressive dogs that are unable to work around other dogs

Dogs that exhibit excessive panting that is not due to heat or exercise.

Dogs with low drives

Dogs that do not have the desire to complete the task.

Dogs that are easily distracted by noise, people, other dogs

11. Evaluation structure and method

11.1 Examples of detailed evaluation assessment and scoring system are at Annex A.
PHYSICAL AND MEDICAL

12. Physical evaluation

12.1 Preliminary requirements

To ensure proper identification, all dogs submitted for evaluation must have a collar/harness with the dog's name affixed to it.

The collar/harness must be strong enough to restrain the dog.

It is considered a best practice to ensure that a computer microchip/tattoo for identification purposes is implanted in each dog.

13. Breed, sex, weight and height requirements

13.1 Breeds historically selected for detection purposes come from the sporting, herding, hound and working categories.

13.2 Age. The adult dog should be 12 to 36 months of age at time of the evaluation.

13.3 Sex. Dogs of either sex have shown good ability in detection work. A female in estrus should be deferred until a minimum of 4 – 6 weeks after completion.

13.4 Weight/Height. Weight must be proportional to the dog's frame and skeletal size. An objective rating system to measure body condition (weight for frame) should be used. (Development and Validation of body condition score system for dogs: a clinical tool. La Flamme Canine practice 1997 Vol 22 pages 10-15.)

13.5 Color. Any color typical for the breed is acceptable.

14. Medical requirements

14.1 General. Must be in excellent health, structurally sound and medically able to enter training

14.2 Immunization required for evaluation and procurement. At minimum must either have been vaccinated (essential in the case of Rabies) or have a titer indication showing that a particular vaccination was not needed within the previous 12 months for :

Rabies – vaccination in accordance with state and local laws

Canine distemper (CDV)

Canine adenovirus (type 2) (CAV-2) (Canine Hepatitis)

Parvovirus (CPV-2)

Leptospirosis

There may be particular regional/national requirements which must be considered. The 2006 AAHA (American Animal Hospital Association) guidelines should be consulted.

14.2.1 A vaccination/titer certificate issued by a veterinarian with individual dog identification (name, tattoo, brand or microchip #) must be provided on all dogs

14.3 Socialization and ability to be examined. Dogs should be socialized to humans and should be able to tolerate medical examination procedures

14.4 Minimum signalment data

14.4.1 The following minimum information should appear on all medical record documents and information:

Dog identification

Name

Tattoo number

Microchip number

Whelping date (or age at time of examination if whelping date not

known)

Date of examination or entry

Name and signature of examining veterinarian

14.4.1.1 The following should appear at least once in the medical record:

Sex and reproductive status

Breed

Color pattern

Contact information for owner

Contact information for examining veterinarian

14.5 Minimum medical examination database

14.5.1 The following constitutes the best practice to complete minimum database for an examination

14.5.1.1 Complete physical examination

Gait. The gait should be assessed at the walk, trot and run

Skin and coat. Must be healthy in appearance

Oral cavity. Dentition.

Heart and lungs

Heart sounds

Heart rate

Heart rhythm

Lung sounds

Cardiovascular system at rest

Cardiovascular system upon exercise

Respiratory system at rest

Respiratory system on exercise

Musculoskeletal system

Nervous system and senses, and sensory organs

Nervous system

Eyes and adenexa

Functional vision

Anatomy of ears

Functional hearing

Nose and nasopharynx

Demonstrated olfactory ability

Reproductive and urinary system.

Intact or neutered reproductive system. Document monorchidism or cryptorchidism.

Urinary tract anatomy

Urinary tract function

Laboratory minimum database

Hematology and blood chemistry

Collection of blood sample for routine testing
Blood chemistry. Complete blood count.

Serology

Canine heartworm testing

Urinalysis

Collection of urine sample for routine testing

Urine specific gravity

Fecal examination.

Collection of fecal sample for routine testing

Skeletal radiology.

Depending on the planned use of the dog, it may be that early signs of degenerative joint disease would not be acceptable.

It is considered a best practice to acquire diagnostic elbow and hip radiographs for evaluation of elbow and hip conformation and that these be reviewed by an independent board certified veterinary radiologist.

It is a best practice to ensure that the minimum patient data are projected or imprinted (“flashed”) permanently on the radiograph at the time of exposure

If further evaluation is warranted, evaluations may be completed at the discretion of the veterinarian or the dog may be deemed unacceptable