

Organisation of a walk test

The Finnish Kennel Club, Scientific Commission (JTT) 13.12.2016. Updated 13.6.2017



Right to participate

The walk test is an official health examination for the following breeds (JTT 10/2016):

- Affenpinscher
- Boston Terrier
- Bulldog
- Griffons
- Japanese Chin
- Pekingese
- King Charles Spaniel
- Pug
- Norwich Terrier
- French Bulldog
- Shih Tzu

To participate in a walk test, the dog must be at least 18 months old and vaccinated and identification marked in accordance with the Finnish Kennel Club's rules and regulations.

Dogs with no right to participate are

- dogs with breathing problems
- dogs whose respiratory tracts have been surgically repaired
- sick dogs
- bitches less than 30 days before whelping or less than 75 days after whelping

The Finnish Kennel Club's anti-doping regulations as well as the general rules regarding incompatibilities are followed at the tests.

Test procedure

At the test, at least one supervising veterinarian must be present. The veterinarian must be authorised by the Finnish Kennel Club to supervise walk tests. In addition, a sufficient number of assistants must be present.

The supervising veterinarian decides based on an initial clinical investigation whether the dog can take part in the test. The veterinarian may also interrupt the test on humane grounds.

The dog is always tested at the owner's responsibility.

Clinical data related to the walk test as well as the result of the actual test are recorded on a walk test form, issued by the Finnish Kennel Club for this purpose. The form is sent to the Finnish Kennel Club after the test.

Test site and conditions

The walk test is preferably conducted indoors. If the test is conducted outdoors, the weather must be dry (no rain). At the test, the dog walks up and down a 30–90 meters long straight track or an L-shaped track. The site must be safe for the dog.

The temperature at the site is measured and recorded on the form. The temperature must be 15–25 °C.

The waiting room and the outdoor area for walking the dogs waiting for their turn must be far enough from the test tracks.

The person walking the dog during the test must be either the dog's owner or some other person appointed by the owner.

The dog must be on a leash during the walk.

The dog must walk or trot (not gallop/run). The person walking the dog may run if the dog's pace requires this.

Test procedure

1. Checking the dog's vaccinations and ID before the walk.
2. Clinical investigation of the dog and filling in the form in this regard.
3. The dog starts walking and the clock is started.
4. The dog walks 1000 meters back and forth on the track, on a leash.
5. When the dog has walked 1000 meters:
 - a. the clock is stopped, the walk is interrupted and the time is recorded on the form. The dog's clinical BOAS grade is recorded on the form (instructions for evaluation, appendix 2).
 - b. the clock or the timer set for 15 minutes is re-started immediately after the dog has stopped walking (=recovery time).
 - c. the dog's temperature is measured to make sure it doesn't suffer from a heatstroke.
6. The recovery time is 15 minutes. The dog spends this time with its owner/handler in the same room where the walk was carried out. The dog should not be cooled down otherwise than by supplying it with water (except for humane reasons, which results in a failed test).
7. The dog is re-evaluated after the recovery time: heart rate, body temperature, general condition. Findings are recorded on the form.
8. The veterinarian fills in the section for results on the form immediately or later, after considering the dog's results and general condition more thoroughly.

Clinical investigation before the test

The dog is examined by a veterinarian the Finnish Kennel Club has authorised to supervise walk tests.

The veterinarian evaluates the dog's general condition and breathing. The dog is disqualified from the test if it shows trouble breathing, its mucosal tissue is turning blue, its body temperature is higher than normal (more than 39,3 °C), or its general condition is abnormal in some other way. The findings from the investigation are recorded on the form.

The dog's heart rate and rectal temperature are measured and recorded on the form.

The grade of nostril stenosis is evaluated in accordance with appendix 1 and recorded on the form.

The dog's upper respiratory sounds are evaluated at rest prior to the test and re-evaluated in the end of the walk. The observations are recorded on the form.

The ratio of muzzle length to skull length (craniofacial ratio, CFR; Packer et al. 2012 and 2015) is measured and recorded on the form.

During the test

During the test, the dog walks or trots on a leash at its own pace (the dog is not allowed to gallop), back and forth along a hallway. The dog is walked by its owner or another person appointed by the owner.

The clock is stopped when the dog has walked 1000 meters and the time for the walk is written down. At the same time, the timer is set for the recovery time of 15 minutes, after which the dog is re-evaluated (see "After the test").

The test must be interrupted and recorded as failed, if the veterinarian discovers that the dog has trouble breathing or if the veterinarian discovers some other immediate threat for the dog's health (i.a. heatstroke) during the test.

The test is recorded as discontinued if the interruption is caused by some other reason than airway syndrome or heatstroke (for instance a severe limp). The reason for the interruption is recorded on the form.

If the supervising veterinarian observes an excessive distraction at the test session, the test is interrupted and no result is recorded for the dog.

The upper respiratory sounds are re-evaluated at the end of the walk and recorded on the form.

After the test

The 15-minute recovery time begins immediately after the dog has walked/trotted 1000 meters.

The recovery takes place in the same place as the walk, together with the owner and in a place, that is as quiet as possible.

The dog's body temperature is measured directly after the walk to make sure that the dog does not suffer from a heatstroke. If the body temperature is alarmingly high (more than 39,5 °C), the test is interrupted and the dog is given necessary first aid treatment (in this case the test is recorded as failed).

The dog's clinical BOAS (brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome) grade is evaluated in accordance with appendix 2 and recorded on the form.

After the recovery time

The dog's heart rate and body temperature are re-measured after the recovery time and the dog's general condition is evaluated (the dog's general appearance must be normal). Based on these, the veterinarian decides whether the dog has recovered to its original state and records this on the form.

Test result

The result of the walk test is based on the dog's performance and/or clinical investigation. The supervising veterinarian decides on the result. If needed, breed-specific time limits can be set based on the accumulated test results.

The veterinarian records the result on the form:

- "Approved"
 - the dog walks 1000 meters in 12 minutes or less and recovers sufficiently from the walk within the following 15 minutes.
 - the dog's body temperature does not have to go back to the temperature prior to the test, if the dog's condition is otherwise completely normal and the veterinarian considers the dog has recovered from the walk.
- "Failed"
 - the veterinarian has, based on the initial investigation, recorded that the dog has symptoms suggesting shortness of breath (dyspnoea), the dog's mucosal tissue is turning blue (cyanosis), or that its body temperature is above the average (hyperthermia).
 - the veterinarian interrupts an ongoing test because of the above-mentioned symptoms (= test is failed due to respiratory tract symptoms).
 - the dog is not able to successfully complete the test within the required 12 minutes and 15-minute recovery time.
- "Discontinued"
 - the veterinarian detects some other visible illness (not the above mentioned respiratory symptoms or hyperthermia), which completely prevents the dog from taking part in the test or prevents the continuation of the test.
 - the test is interrupted by the owner or the handler.

Some notes for test organisers

- When choosing the test venue, it's good to remember that the temperature must be 15–25 °C. The temperature in the room must be measured and recorded on the form (remember to bring a thermometer!).
- It is a good idea to teach the dogs how to walk on a leash and make them familiar with measuring the rectal temperature.
- It is good to ensure that first aid is available for cooling down the dogs, if necessary.
- More than one dog can take the test at the same time, on tracks that are side by side (the dogs may not be walked in a single file), if there is enough space and other resources.