

Conducting the walk test for brachycephalic breeds

The Finnish Kennel Club, Scientific Commission (JTT)
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Right to participate

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

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

Right to participate in a walk test is given to dogs which are at least 18 months of age and identified and vaccinated in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Finnish Kennel Club.

The Finnish Kennel Club's antidoping regulations, as well as the general rules regarding incompatibilities are followed in the walk test.

Dogs with no right to participate are

- Dogs with breathing problems or suggestive symptoms
- Dogs whose respiratory tracts have been surgically repaired
- Sick dogs
- Bitches less than 30 days before whelping or less than 75 days after whelping

Test procedure

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

The supervising veterinarian decides, on the basis of an initial clinical investigation, whether the dog can take part in the test. The veterinarian can 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 forms are sent to the Finnish Kennel Club after the test.

Test site and conditions

The walk test is conducted indoors. At the test, the dogs walk on a straight track, which is at least 30 meters long and with no more than one angle. 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.

It is recommended that the males are tested first, and the bitches after the males.

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 of the dog owners own choosing.

The dog must be on a leash during the walk.

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

Steps

1. Checking the dog's vaccinations and ID right away, 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 along a straight track, on a leash.
5. When the dog has walked for 1000 meters or for 12 minutes:
 1. The clock is stopped, the walk is interrupted, and the time is recorded on the form.
 2. The clock or the timer, which is set for 15 minutes, is re-started immediately after the dog is done walking.
 3. The upper respiratory sounds are evaluated and the grade is recorded on the form. 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 is conducted. The dog should not be cooled down otherwise than by supplying it with water (except for humane reasons, which result in a failed test).
7. The dog is re-evaluated after the recovery time: Heart rate, body temperature, general condition, BOAS grade. Findings are recorded on the form.
8. The veterinarian can fill 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 investigated by a veterinarian authorized by the Finnish Kennel Club 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, it suffers from alarming hyperthermia, 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 dog's upper respiratory sounds are evaluated at rest prior to the test, and again immediately after the test. The observations are recorded on the form.

The grade of nostril stenosis is evaluated in accordance with appendix 1, 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 for 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 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.

After the test

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

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

The dog's upper respiratory sounds are re-evaluated immediately after the walk and the grade is recorded on the form.

It is recommended to measure the dog's body temperature directly after the walk to make sure that the dog does not suffer from a heatstroke. The test is interrupted if the temperature is alarmingly high, and the dog is given first aid treatment (in this case, the test is recorded as failed).

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). The veterinarian decides whether the dog has recovered to its original state, and marks this on the form.

The dog's BOAS symptoms (BOAS = brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome) are evaluated in accordance with appendix 2, and recorded on the test 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.

- "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 (dyspnea), the dog's mucosal tissue is turning blue (cyanosis), or that its body temperature is well 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 versus 15 minute recovery time.

- "Discontinued"
 - The supervising 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 the test organizers:

- When choosing the test site, 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's a good idea to teach the dogs how to walk on a leash and make them familiar with measuring the rectal temperature.
- Ensure sufficient first aid: make sure that dogs can be cooled down properly, if necessary.
- More than one dog can take the test at the same time, on tracks that are side by side (the dogs cannot do the test walking single file), provided that there is enough space and other resources. In this case, more than one veterinarian needs to be present: one veterinarian can supervise one dog, and two veterinarians can supervise three dogs walking side by side.