

The Pets As Therapy Temperament Assessment

What to expect from the temperament assessment for your dog.

Dogs need to be able to....

Walk on a relaxed lead, without excessive pulling and without the use of head collars, harnesses or check chains.

Why?

PAT dogs need to be under the owner's control at all times, without relying on the use of training or behaviour correction aids.

Accept being stroked and handled and having their paws, tail and ears checked by the assessor.

Why?

PAT dogs have to accept being patted, often vigorously, by patients or clients. They need to not be overly worried about having their paws, ears, or tail handled by a stranger. The assessor will check that the dog's nails are trimmed short and you should keep the nails short at all times

Take a food treat gently without snatching from the assessor.

Why?

Patients and clients love to be able to give their PAT dog a food treat. It is important that they do not snatch it because some patients, such as older people have very fragile skin.

Respond appropriately to a sudden noise or disturbance in the room whilst being tested.

Why?

PAT dogs will encounter lots of new and unexpected stimuli – they should not be overly fearful of this and recover quickly.

Owners need to be able to....

Demonstrate control of their dog on the lead whilst holding a conversation with the assessor

Why?

Much of the volunteer's time is spent talking to different people and PAT dogs need to be able to wait patiently under the owner's control at all times.

Groom their dog's back, chest, stomach and tail.

Why?

If a dog readily accepts grooming by its owner, it demonstrates that the owner has control over their dog's behaviour and the dog is willing to accept their authority.

Demonstrate that they can restrict their dog by holding its collar or holding him/her firmly.

Why?

PAT dogs need to be able to accept restraint from their owners in case of an emergency in the establishment or if the owner needs to withdraw their dog quickly from a patient or client.

Present their dog in a fit, clean and healthy condition.

Why?

Fit, healthy dogs behave appropriately as PAT dogs under demanding social and physical situations. A well-groomed and clean dog is a sign of a responsible pet owner.

Assessors are also asked to make note of any other behaviours that they may observe throughout the assessment, for example: jumping up, pawing, or excessive licking. Such behaviours are not acceptable on Pets As Therapy visits.

Please see below for the main reasons why dogs are deferred following assessments

Deferrals

Sometimes, dogs are deferred following assessment and you will be invited to re-apply in 6 months time.

Below are the main reasons why dogs are deferred, which you may find useful to consider before presenting your dog for assessment. Deferrals are discussed and considered very carefully by the Charity - where there is considered to be an unacceptable risk to the clients/patients that we are visiting, the dog will be deferred. Assessors are trained to conduct the test in such a way that these behaviours are assessed fairly and consistently.

Jumping up - Jumping up is the main reason why dogs are deferred. The assessor is asked to note whether the dog jumps up, at whom (assessor or owner) and how many times. Jumping up is not allowed because of the danger of causing injury by knocking somebody over. It also indicates that the dog is not under the owner's full control.

Pawing, or putting paws up - Dogs will be deferred if they put up one or both paws, or offer a paw repeatedly to either the assessor or owner. Pawing can cause considerable injury, particularly to elderly people who have very thin skin and the slower and poorer rates of healing in older people increase the risk of infection.

Pulling on the lead - Dogs will be deferred if the assessor notes that they pull strongly on the lead. This behaviour indicates that the dog is not under the owner's full control.

Reluctance/backing away when being fussed - If the dog displays any signs of anxiety or reluctance when being fussed by the assessor, for example, backing away or struggling to get away, they will be deferred because such behaviours suggest a dog that is unwilling or unable to accept close or intense handling.

Vocalisations, such as barking or growling - Dogs that bark during the test will be deferred as barking can be indicative of anxiety or discomfort, or another unacceptable behaviour, for example, attention-seeking behaviour toward the owner.

Mouthing - Mouthing is basically an inhibited bite and, as such, is an unacceptable behaviour due to the risk of injury to patients/clients.

Licking - Licking is not accepted because it is considered a hygiene risk and may present a risk of infection to certain clients/patients. Licking can also be a sign of stress or anxiety that a dog displays when it is uncomfortable with a particular situation.

Taking food greedily - Snatching food so that the assessor can feel the dog's teeth is not accepted due to the possible risk of injury to the client/patient if the dog is offered food whilst on a visit.

Considering if your dog may perform any of these behaviours during the test may be a useful indicator of whether it is ready or not to be presented for assessment.

For further information please contact the Pets As Therapy Head Office:

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