



FEMA

**FEMA National US&R Response System
Suggested Guidelines for Screening Disaster Canine Candidates**

- **Canine candidates should be one of the following breeds which have statistically proven successful in gaining certification in the US&R program:**
 - Labrador Retriever
 - German Shepherd Dog
 - Border Collie
 - Belgian Malinois
 - Golden Retriever
- **Canine candidate should be between 12 and 24 months of age when screened.**
- **Screening Process**
 - Administered by two assessors selected by the Canine Coordinator
- **Medical Exam to be completed prior to acquisition**

**FEMA National US&R Response System
Process for Screening Canine Candidates**

Canine: _____ Date: _____
 Handler: _____ Screeners: _____

Canine screening candidates must be physically capable of performing the exercises described below.

Screening should be performed on FSA level rubble, unfamiliar to the canine, which is from easy to moderate difficulty and includes surface changes (e.g., concrete to wood pallets). Prior to screening, allow handler and canine 15 minutes to become acclimated to the rubble site. Handler should perform short retrieves and engage canine in play with a favorite toy. After the 15 minute acclimation to the rubble, canine should have at least 15 minutes of rest.

Tie-out

Set-up:

Tie out canine with 6 ft lead ensuring that the lead can be secured at the handle-end of the lead, not at the canine. Handler leaves canine, without issuing a command. After 1 minute, a person walks by with a canine unknown to the screened canine. On the first pass, the unknown canine is away from the tied-out canine. The person/canine walk laterally by the tied-out canine, then reverse direction and return, this time with the unknown canine on the inside. Make certain that the canines cannot physically contact each other.

A stranger approaches the tied-out canine, laterally, and unties the canine, at the end of the canine’s leash, not at the collar, then returns the canine to its handler.

The canine must score YES to continue with screening.

Scoring (Borderline performance defaults to “No”)

(circle score)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indifferent or friendly • Tail up, wagging or relaxed • Approaches in friendly way or completely ignores 	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fearful or aggressive • Tail tucked, trembling, crouching, moves away • Rigid posture, growling, barking hackles up 	No

Notes

Independent Possession

Set-up:

After canine has completed rubble acclimation and has rested, handler plays with canine in non-distracting environment (not on rubble), with favorite toy. Once canine is engaged with toy, the canine is ignored and its behavior is observed for 1 minute. The entire exercise shall not exceed 2 minutes.

Engaged in toy defined as:

- Plays with, carries or guards toy
- Attempts to get people to play (ie: drops toy at their feet, jumps on them, barks at them)

Scoring (Borderline performance defaults to the lower numerical value)

(circle score)

• Does not engage in toy.	0
• Engaged with the toy for less than 30 seconds.	1
• Engaged with the toy for more than 30 seconds but less than 1 minute.	2
• Engaged with the toy for the entire minute.	3

Notes

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Play on Rubble

Set-up:

Get the canine on relatively stable rubble and play with canine's favorite toy. Can be tug or retrieve play. Once the canine is engaged in play, pass the canine/toy to a stranger. The stranger moves about 20 feet from the handler and continues to play for 1 to 2 minutes while the handler ignores the canine. Evaluate the canine's enthusiasm to play with the stranger. The entire exercise shall not exceed 5 minutes.

Scoring (Borderline performance defaults to the lower numerical value)

(circle score)

• Refuses to engage in play with the stranger	0
• Engages with stranger only with enticement	1
• Loses interest quickly	
• Engages with stranger	2
• Occasionally needs enticement to continue to play	
• Engages with stranger	3
• Plays enthusiastically	
• Never loses interest in toy or play	

Notes

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Hunt on Rubble

Set-up:

The handler, canine and an assistant begin the exercise on the ground at the edge of the rubble in a different area from previous exercises. Select a start point that allows the canine to directly enter the rubble. The assistant throws the toy to an evaluator on the rubble. The evaluator gets the canine's attention, then throws the toy to a second evaluator/assistant on the rubble and out of sight of the canine. That evaluator/assistant places the toy at least 10 yds from the perimeter, in specific locations as described below.

Ensure that the canine cannot see the handler while searching for the toy, unless the canine returns to the edge of the rubble.

Canine must hunt for the toy for a minimum of 1 minute on at least one of the throws. If the canine has not located the toy in 1 minute, the evaluator will locate the toy, show it to the canine, re-place the toy, and give the canine the opportunity to retrieve it.

- 1st. Immediate release, toy in obvious find on stable surface
- 2nd. 15 second delay release, toy in a depression in the rubble

All participants relocate to a different start point at least 15 yds from first 2 throws

- 3rd. 30 second delay release, toy on a different surface
- 4th. 60 second delay release, toy at least 20 yds from the perimeter of rubble

Scoring (Borderline performance defaults to the lower numerical value)
(circle score)

	Time Delay	0	1	3	6
		0	5	0	0
• Does not enter rubble.		0	0	0	0
• Tentatively enters rubble					
• Does not hunt for the toy					
• Repeatedly comes back to look at handler or to return to handler					
• Avoids surface changes (e.g., concrete to pallets), unstable or unpleasant surfaces	1	1	1	1	1
• Repeatedly traverses same route					
• Will not retrieve toy once it is located					

**FEMA National US&R Response System
Preliminary Medical Examination Subsequent to Screening Canine
Candidates**

The following is based upon the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) recommendations.

- **Medical exam performed by a licensed veterinarian to include the following:**
 - Basic physical examination
 - canine's history (if available)
 - temperature
 - attitude
 - hydration
 - mucous membrane color
 - capillary refill time
 - eyes (including pupils and retinas)
 - ears
 - nose
 - mouth/throat
 - peripheral lymph nodes
 - heart
 - pulses
 - lungs/respiration
 - abdomen
 - urogenital system
 - skin
 - perineal and rectal exam
 - musculoskeletal system
 - neurologic system
- **X-ray of Hips/elbows**
- **Bloodwork to include CBC and biochemical profile**
- **Heartworm test**
- **Fecal Exam**
- **Urinalysis**