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AMERICAN ANIMAL HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Working, Assistance, & Therapy Dog Guidelines

TOOLKIT



Guidelines



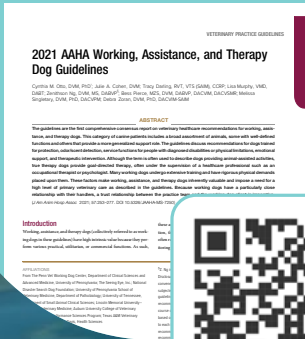
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RESOURCES for Veterinary Teams

aaha.org/workingdog

Read



Tools

Healthcare Recommendations for Protection, Detection, Assistance, and Therapy Dogs

Healthcare Category	Recommendation	Discussion/Notes	Additional Considerations
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual wellness exam • Core vaccines to include leptospirosis, Bordetella, CDV, and rabies • Annual heartworm testing, unless known to be negative • Annual fecal parasite testing • Annual tick and flea testing • Annual microchip verification • Annual dental cleaning • Annual dental exam • Annual behavioral assessment and re-evaluation to best address the dog's needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration for drug therapy should be made for the dog's health and safety • Annual microchip verification • Annual dental cleaning • Annual dental exam • Annual behavioral assessment and re-evaluation to best address the dog's needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leptospirosis • Bordetella • CDV • Rabies • Heartworm • Fecal parasites • Ticks and fleas • Microchip • Dental • Behavioral
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of and prepared to address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of and prepared to address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of and prepared to address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems • Identify and address behavior problems
Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease • Early detection of disease



Top 5 Messages

1 | Learn the special needs & jobs of working dogs

Master the difference between working, assistance and therapy dogs.

2 | Look at it from the handler or trainer's perspective

Give them the benefit of the doubt and trust them for subtle observations our teams may miss. They may depend more on this dog's health than the average pet owner would.

3 | Keep everyone safe and decrease stress

Low stress handling is key!

4 | Minimize disease transmission and injury to working dogs

Working dogs often interact with human handlers or clients who are health-compromised and/or are exposed to dangerous environments.

5 | Understand the value of these awesome dogs for their family, organization & community

We keep them safe, so they can keep others safe!

Meet Penny!



2021 AAHA Working, Assistance, and Therapy Dog Guidelines

There Are Multiple Types of Working Dogs

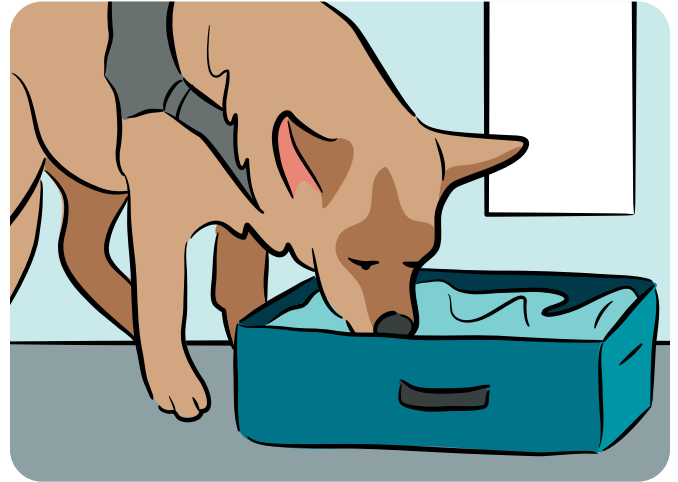
Know the work they do:

DETECTION

Working Dogs: The Detection Dog

These dogs are trained to detect and alert to the presence of certain scents or odors.

Examples: *dogs that detect explosives, narcotics, live humans, human remains, weapons, medical conditions, and more*



PROTECTION

Working Dogs: The Protection Dog

A protection dog is trained to alert the handler to human or animal threats and to deter the threat.

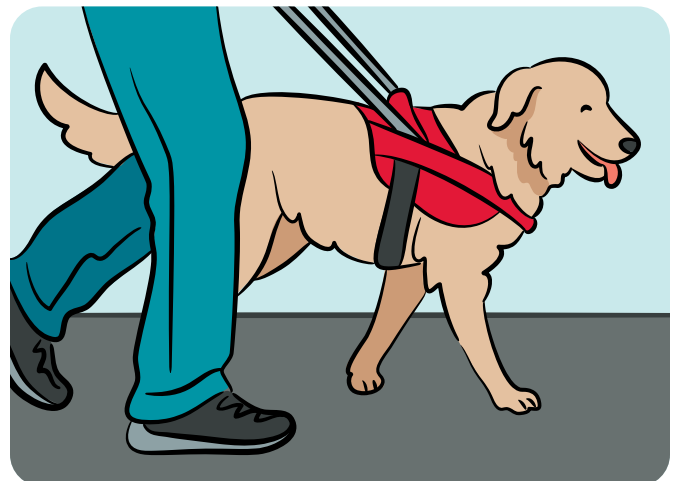
Examples: *police dogs, patrol dogs, law enforcement dogs, military working dogs, private security dogs, and livestock guard dogs*

SERVICE

Assistance Dogs: The Service Dog

A service dog is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.

Examples: *guide dogs for the blind, hearing dogs, mobility assistance dogs, seizure alert or response dogs, psychiatric service dogs, diabetic alert dogs, autism support dogs, and allergy detection dogs*





EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Assistance Dogs: The Emotional Support Dog

Emotional support dogs are recognized by the ADA, but not as service dogs. They are defined by the Fair Housing Act as dogs providing therapeutic support to disabled individuals by providing companionship, relieving loneliness, and “sometimes help with depression, anxiety and certain phobias” but are not specially trained to perform specific tasks.

Examples: *Emotional support dogs have no restrictions on breed, size, or weight and can be any dog that alleviates symptoms of emotional or mental stress.*

THERAPY

Therapy Dogs






A therapy dog promotes improvement in human physical, social, emotional, or cognitive function, and functions in either group or individual settings.

Examples: *dogs who perform airport visits, de-stress events and visiting hospital patients, caregivers, and residents of nursing homes*





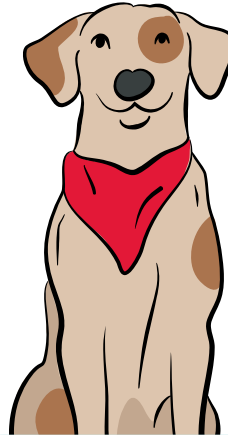
5 WAYS TO BECOME YOUR PRACTICE'S WORKING DOG CHAMPION

-  **1 Learn about the types of working dogs**, the types of work they do, and more about them from their handlers.
-  **2 Become familiar with common terms, acronyms and abbreviations** so you can “speak the language” of the working dog community.
-  **3 Familiarize yourself with the different medical care considerations** of working dogs (e.g., olfaction-affecting medications).
-  **4 Act as a liaison between the practice and the handler** to facilitate and adapt care for these patients in a calm, low-stress environment. Use the AAHA Working Dog History Checklist to collect a thorough history and help the entire team work together.
-  **5 Create a written follow-up** outlining the expected duration of recovery and return to work.

Assistance Dogs: Who's Who?



Service Dog



Therapy Dog



Emotional Support Dog

Examples	Service Dog	Therapy Dog	Emotional Support Dog
Examples	Guide dog for the blind, seizure or diabetic alert dog, autism support dog	Dogs who are part of speech or occupational therapy, dogs who visit hospital patients and nursing homes	Can be any dog that alleviates symptoms of emotional or mental stress
Recognized as a service animal by the ADA?	✓ Yes	✗ No	✗ No
Special training requirements?	✓ Yes	Not per the ADA; individual certifications may vary	✗ No
Access permitted to "no pets" areas?	✓ Yes	✗ No	Depends
Medical management goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize when treatments may impact ability to work • Allow clients to be present at exams • Adjust communication to handler's disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize when treatments may impact ability to work • Avoid zoonotic disease and deworm regularly • Avoid raw diets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on canine standard of care • Emphasize preventive care • Make behavioral recommendations consistent with dog's role • Ensure dog has stable temperament

A Good History is Essential...

and Different Than Your Standard Questionnaire

Scan QR code
to download this
resource



AAHA Working Dog History Checklist

Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability? Yes: _____ No

What work or task has the dog been trained to perform? _____

Who does this dog serve? _____

What environments does this dog live and work in? _____

What is the frequency and method of transportation? _____

What special verbal or visual commands does this dog respond to? _____

What is used for positive reinforcement? _____

What does this dog's diet consist of? _____

What equipment, if any, is used with this service dog? _____

What animals is this dog exposed to? _____

What people is this dog exposed to? _____

What are this dog's working hours? _____

How are breaks provided? _____

Has this dog been consistently and reliably following commands and performing tasks?

Has this dog been displaying any significant behavioral signs of stress? _____

How will you or the handler decide when to retire this dog? _____

Do any barriers to routine care or treatment exist? _____

So You Get a Call About a Working Dog...



Step 1

TRIAGE

- ▶ Assess urgency
- ▶ Be prepared to refer asap
- ▶ Be ready to prioritize dog



Step 2

SCHEDULING

- ▶ Allow extra time
- ▶ Consider early or late in day
- ▶ Ask if dog needs sedation
- ▶ Alert team to special needs



Step 3

APPOINTMENT

- ▶ Low stress handling is critical
- ▶ Know this specific dog's job
- ▶ Understand handler's need to stay with dog
- ▶ No treats without asking



Step 6

FOLLOW UP

- ▶ Be cognizant of owner needs for communication
- ▶ Communication is critical
- ▶ Document expected return to work



Step 5

TREATMENT

- ▶ Be aware of medication side effects
- ▶ Be aware of breeding status
- ▶ Understand long and short term impact on work



Step 4

DIAGNOSTICS

- ▶ Prioritize early intervention
- ▶ Do not separate dog from owner
- ▶ Agencies may need to be consulted
- ▶ Know unusual risk factors





This toolkit is made possible with generous support from Merck Animal Health.

Quiz Yourself!

Which of the following types of working dogs is trained to detect and alert to the presence of certain scents or odors?

The Protection Dog

The Detection Dog

The Service Dog

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Next



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