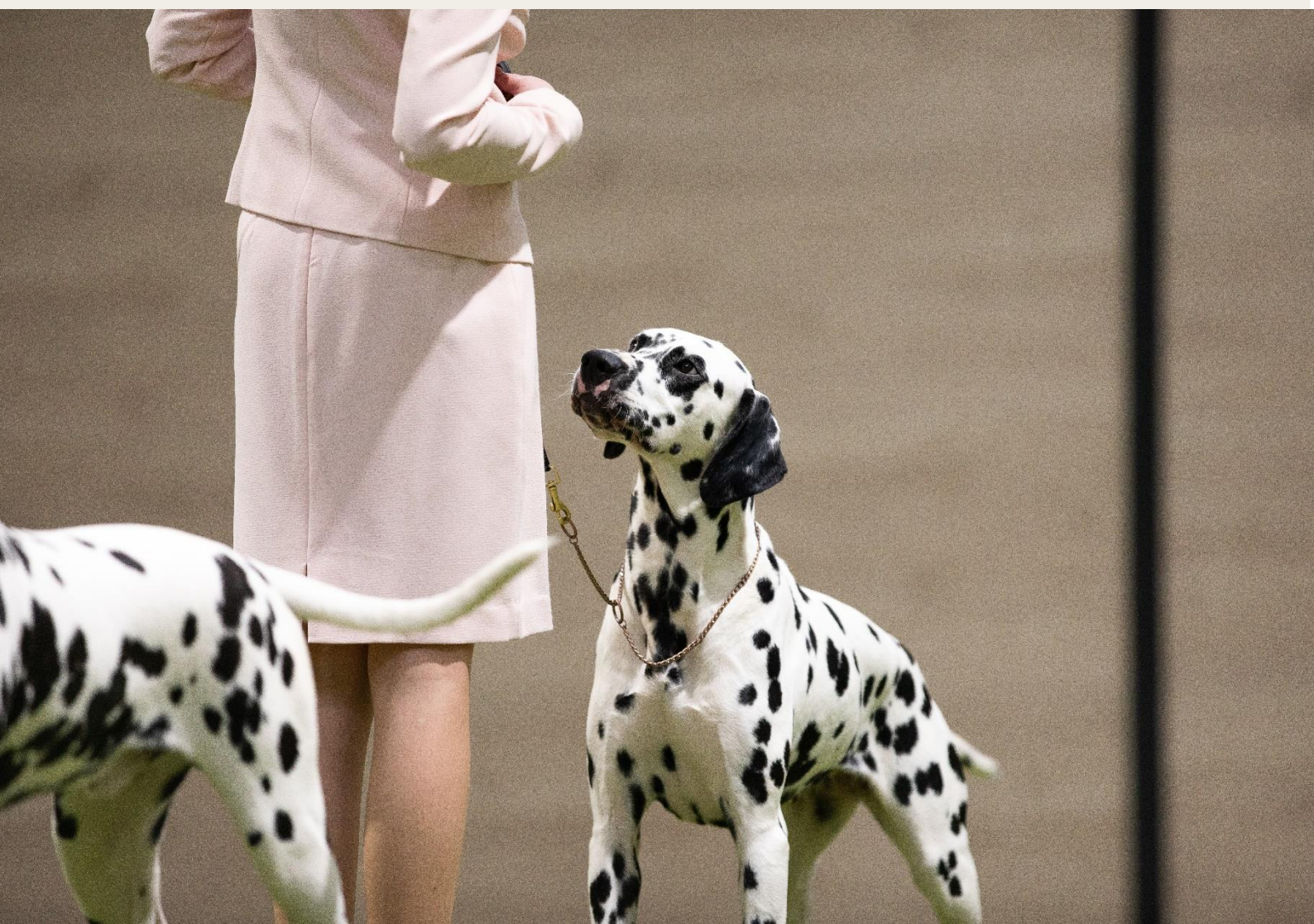


# **Veterinary Health Check Guidance**

## 2025 Edition



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## Introduction

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In 2022 the Kennel Club began a process of reviewing the previous measures in place to safeguard the health of dogs at shows. As part of this process a review has been undertaken of Breed Watch and veterinary health checks. The Kennel Club now has one set of clear guidance for veterinary surgeons when examining any dog of any breed for a veterinary health check. All those involved in dog showing, including judges, exhibitors and veterinary surgeons must consider the dog's health first.

The Kennel Club advises that veterinary health checks are required for entry into group competitions for all category three breeds. The criteria for examining dogs for pre-group competition checks are provided for veterinary surgeons.

## Champion Title Checks

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Category three breeds will also be required to complete veterinary health checks to confirm champion title status. The same guidance for veterinary surgeons should be used. Additional information is also provided in the Champion title checks process and guidance document.

All vets should review this documentation before completing veterinary health checks.

We thank all those involved in safeguarding and championing the wellbeing of dogs at shows and further protecting the future of pedigree dog shows.

## Guidance to Veterinary Surgeons

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### Veterinary Examination

Veterinary surgeons are asked to remember that this may be a stressful time for exhibitors and to be sensitive and sympathetic in their manner. However, any dog that is assessed by the veterinary surgeon, whatever its breed, should be free from clinical signs of disease and conformational exaggerations that present concern to the health of the dog during the check. It is quite possible that a particular dog might pass the veterinary check on one occasion and fail on another, as the clinical signs may change.

The veterinary surgeon is not expected to use any diagnostic aids; this is an external, visual examination only. It is the responsibility of the show organisers to arrange satisfactory ambient lighting, so that there is no need for supplementary lighting to be used when carrying out the examination.

The veterinary surgeon must scan and record the microchip number of the dog on the veterinary health check form for all veterinary checks undertaken.

**Veterinary surgeons are asked to look for the following clinical signs in four main areas:**

- Visible disease of the eye or eyelids, ocular pain or visual impairment
- Lameness
- Dermatological disorders such as inflammation or evidence of previous infection
- Abnormal respiratory noise (at rest or with light exercise)

The above categories are common areas associated with perceived exaggeration in certain breeds. The examination is an objective assessment to check for visible or audible signs of pain or discomfort resulting from exaggerated conformation. The examination may consider evidence of past serious conditions leading to scarring or signs of chronic inflammation (e.g. corneal pigmentation or damage, or skin scarring or baldness), where this is related to conformational exaggeration.

### Conformation surgery

Signs or suspicion of conformation surgery related to conformational concerns should be noted in the confidential advisory comment box included on the veterinary health check form.

### Comments & Pass or Fail

The veterinary surgeon is asked to scan and complete the microchip number for the dog and then complete the following three sections. The first compulsory, followed by two discretionary sections as follows;

- **Section one:** Is the dog passed to compete in the group competition and/or passed to for Ch. Title status. The vet is asked to tick yes or no and then provide the reason for failing the dog if applicable.

- **Section two:** The veterinary surgeon can complete, at their discretion, advisory conformational concerns, outside of the reason the dog may have passed or failed the vet check.
- **Section three:** The veterinary surgeon can complete, at their discretion, advisory conformational concerns that they do not wish to be shared beyond the owner and the Kennel Club.

The veterinary surgeon must then sign and date the form and seal three individual copies in the envelopes provided. One copy should be provided to the owners, one copy to the representative for the show secretary to be returned to the Kennel Club and one copy will remain with the vet for their records.

## Assessment Guidance for Veterinary Surgeons

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### Ocular Disease

The veterinary surgeon is expected to take note of any readily apparent eye and eyelid problems. Examples would include evidence of previous eyelid surgery, lashes or hairs in contact with the cornea producing irritation, ocular discharge, significant tear staining, excessive blinking, redness and conformation-related corneal damage. Observations of this nature will be helpful in establishing if any ocular problem is causing the dog pain or discomfort.

In particular, the veterinary surgeon is asked to look for any ocular discharge, increased tear production, tear staining, redness, discomfort or pain associated with the conditions summarised below: -

#### Eyelids

- Upper and/or lower eyelid entropion
- Upper and/or lower eyelid ectropion
- Combination of both entropion and ectropion
- Abnormal third eyelid position, absence, prolapsed third eyelid gland

#### Eyelashes and Skin Hairs

- Trichiasis, distichiasis, ectopic cilia, nasal fold hairs, other skin hairs

#### Tears and Blinking

- Excessive blinking, increased tear production, tear staining, ocular discharge associated with ocular discomfort.
- Inadequate blinking associated with a prominent eye globe.
- Any indications of corneal damage (including ulceration, scarring or pigmentation) due to conformational exaggerations such as eyelid abnormalities, or because the eye is too prominent.
- Redness of the white of the eye associated with conformational exaggerations, or inflammatory or other eye disease.
- Damage to the cornea associated with conformational exaggeration.

## **Movement**

Soundness is assessed by evaluating the presence or absence of lameness. It is not necessary for the veterinary surgeon to make a full examination of the joints, as no diagnosis is required.

- Irregular gait or uneven action
- Any signs of ataxia (lack of co-ordination of muscle movements); for example, difficulty in controlling the co-ordination of the hind legs when moving. If necessary, the veterinary surgeon may ask the owner to move the dog appropriately or may assess its response when its feet are manipulated, in order to establish whether a dog is showing ataxia.
- It is asked that veterinary surgeon records observations and comments on movement
- Any lameness will lead to failure to pass the examination.

## **Dermatological Signs**

Skin folds including tail folds are assessed by looking for associated inflammation or infection of the skin in the depth of the folds or scarring from previous infection.

- Inflammation, scarring or hairlessness associated with Skin folds or facial wrinkles. Slight reddening or hair thinning of the skin within the crevice of a skin fold is acceptable. The veterinary surgeon is asked to look for evidence of a current clinical problem, such as a moist discharge, moderate to severe reddening of the skin, ulceration or signs of pyoderma (skin infection) within the skin folds, or evidence of previous clinical problems within the folds, such as scarring, thickening of the skin, or significant hair loss or discoloration of the hair coat.
- Eyelid tacking or other cosmetic surgery: evidence of previous cosmetic surgery will lead to failure to pass the examination.
- Inflammation or infection of the ears. Slight reddening of the pinna (ear flap) or ear canal is acceptable, as is the presence of a slight waxy discharge; however, any visible purulent discharge (pus), crusting, swelling or thickening of the tissues of the ear canal, or severe reddening of these tissues, will lead to failure to pass the examination.

## **Respiratory noise & effort**

*Where appropriate the veterinarian may request for the dog to be exercised for 3 minutes.*

- Breathing is assessed by observing respiratory rate, ease of respiration, tolerance to moderate exercise and the presence of noisy breathing. Persistent stridor (high pitched 'wood sawing' respiratory noise) or stertor (low pitched 'snoring' respiratory noise) audible without a stethoscope is grounds for failure, as is any evidence of dyspnoea (difficulty in breathing), respiratory distress or intolerance of moderate exercise.

## **Responsibility of the Veterinary Surgeon on the day of the show**

- To read this guidance document well in advance of the show.
- To complete the veterinary check paperwork and confidentially seal in the envelopes provided. one copy should be provided to the owner, one copy to be

retained by the vet and one should be provided to the show secretary to return to the Kennel Club.

- The vet should confirm to the show secretary the dogs that have been checked and if they have passed to enter group competition. This enables the show secretary to inform the show stewarding team.

## Guidance to Show Societies

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### Show Management Responsibility

- To ensure vet checks are carried out on BOB winners of all breeds listed as Category Three on Breed Watch **if they wish to compete in the group competition.** (+AVNSC)
- To ensure vet checks are carried out as seamlessly as possible.
- To ensure that a representative from the show society is appointed to attend all veterinary checks as an independent witness and that they have read and understood the notes for representatives attending veterinary checks.
- To offer advice and guidance to exhibitors, judges and ring stewards.
- To keep good records of all vet checks and send all appropriate paperwork to the Kennel Club in a timely manner.

Please note that stewards are not required to escort the BOB winner to the vet to be vet checked. This is the responsibility of the exhibitor to ensure they complete the veterinary health check within reasonable time before the group if they wish to compete in the group competition. Stewards should check that the exhibitor has passed a vet check before entering the group competition.

### Veterinary Health Check Process

The process will be carried out as follows:

- Best of Breed selected, award card handed out.
- Exhibitor attends the show vet to have the veterinary health check completed **if they wish to enter the group competition.** Or if they wish to have a champion title check.
- Veterinary surgeon confirms to show secretary dogs that have been checked prior to the group and if they have passed or failed. Veterinary check paperwork is provided to the show secretary to return to the Kennel Club.
- Dogs of category three breeds who have passed the veterinary check can enter group competition.
- Society to send a copy of the vet check form to the Kennel Club in a timely manner.

### Exhibit fails check

- Veterinary Surgeon gives exhibitor a copy of the vet check form and confirms his/her dog is ineligible to enter the group competition on the day.
- **The vet's decision is final, and no other veterinary examinations should take place once a veterinary check has been undertaken for entering the group competition.**

## Things to remember

- Brief relevant judges and ring stewards.
- Decide where the checks will be carried out and ensure that there is ample space for the dogs to be moved in order for the vet to check for lameness - this area will ideally be located near the group collecting ring.
- Ensure there is ample signage up at the show so that Category 3 Breed exhibitors know where they should be taking their dogs.
- If an exhibitor refuses to have their dog vet checked, they are not permitted to enter the group competition.
- **The vet's decision is final.**

## Regulations

The regulation amendments, of which you will already be aware, are as follows:

### F (1)7. Awards

- F (1)7.b. Best of Breed. Where a breed is separately classified a Best of Breed may be declared but only from those dogs which have received a first prize in a breed class at the show. Where separate classes are provided for each sex of a breed a Best of each Sex must be declared.

### F(1)17. Exhibition of Dogs

- F(1)17.j. Before confirmation of a Best of Breed/Best any Variety Not Separately Classified award - and where appropriate a Champion award - exhibitors of breeds designated as Category Three on Breed Watch are required to present their dogs for examination to a General and Group Championship Show Veterinary Surgeon.

### F(1)27. Best in Show

- F(1)27. Definition of a Category Three Breed. A breed from time to time designated by the Board as requiring particular monitoring by reason of visible condition(s) which may cause health or welfare concerns. Details of Breed Watch and breed categories can be found on the Kennel Club website.

### F(1)27.b. Shows Judged on the Group System

#### (1) Best of Group.

Best of Group and subsequent Group placings must be selected from: -

- (a) The Best of Breed winners in each Group provided that they are unbeaten winning dogs
- (b) The best unbeaten winning dog from the Any Variety Not Separately Classified classes in each Group or on each day

Note: The dog declared Best of Breed/Best Any Variety Not Separately Classified from a breed designated by the Kennel Club as Category Three on Breed Watch is not eligible to compete in the Group competition, unless it has passed an examination by the Show's Veterinary Surgeon. If the dog fails to pass the examination, it is ineligible to compete in the relevant Group.