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Introduction

In January 2011, the Kennel Club announced that all dogs of the then fifteen, high profile breeds, were required to pass a health check by the show veterinary surgeon before they went on to win Best of Breed at Crufts (2012) and any further General and Group Championship Shows. This was to ensure that their Best of Breed awards could be confirmed and that they were of good enough health to continue to compete in the Group.

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. The list of designated Category Three Breeds is kept under regular review as part of Breed Watch health monitoring. The list of Category Three Breeds at the time of printing is available on page 9.

Further information on Breed Watch can be found on the Kennel Club website.

Why have veterinary checks?
The decision to implement health checks was taken by the Board on the advice of the Kennel Club’s Dog Health Group, in order to ensure breeds entering the group competition are outwardly free from signs of discomfort, including lameness and/or ataxia. Dogs must show no signs of timidity, aggression or anxiety which cause distress.

This move, along with other health measures that have been put in place, will help the Kennel Club to ensure that the show ring continues to be a positive influence for change in the world of dogs. The objective of this process is to ensure that improvement in canine health is rewarded in the show ring and to protect the reputation of the sport of dog showing.

The health check will be a veterinary visual observation and opinion on the findings at the time of examination, for the purpose of establishing whether the dog’s health and welfare is compromised, rendering it ineligible to compete in the group competition on the day. It is not intended in any way for the veterinary surgeon to act as a show judge of conformation and breed specific characteristics. The veterinary surgeon is not expected to make a diagnosis, but on occasion this may be an inevitable consequence of the health check.

When is a Veterinary Health Check Required?
All Best of Breed Winners of Category Three Breeds must pass a veterinary health check before entering the group competition. Further, all Category Three Breeds must pass a veterinary health check before a champion title can be confirmed by the Kennel Club.
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.

A Championship Show veterinary surgeon is not expected to evaluate the dogs for conformational characteristics which are of an aesthetic nature only; therefore extreme conformation unassociated with any clinical signs capable of affecting health or welfare do not prevent a dog from entering the group competition. For example, a dog should not fail the examination because it has a short muzzle, unless there is associated difficulty with respiration, nor should a dog fail the examination because it has a roached back, unless there is associated lameness or ataxia. If desired, the veterinary surgeon may comment on features of this nature, which are not considered grounds for disqualification, in the “Additional Comments” section of the paperwork.

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.

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

Clinical Signs:
- Externally visible disease of the eye or eyelids, ocular pain or visual impairment
- Lameness
- Dermatological disorders such as inflammation or evidence of previous infection
- Respiratory effort or noise, if associated with distress (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 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.

Comments & Pass or Fail

The veterinary surgeon is provided with a section on the form to note any findings they consider the owner should be aware of in relation to the health of the dog. Further, if the veterinary surgeon decides to fail the dog, then a written explanation should be provided in the comments section.

Ocular Disease (read in Conjunction with Terminology)

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
- Evidence of previous eyelid surgery related to conformational defects
- 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 associated with long, heavy 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 distress
Breathing is assessed by observing respiratory rate, ease of respiration, tolerance to moderate exercise and the presence of noisy breathing. A slight noise associated with respiration may be noted by the veterinary surgeon, but should not be grounds for failure of the examination unless associated with signs of respiratory difficulty or heat stress during the veterinary check.
- Difficulty breathing
- Lack of exercise tolerance. The veterinary surgeon should evaluate the dog's ability to tolerate movement at a steady trot over a reasonable distance, comparable to the level of exercise expected in the breed ring. The intention is not to exercise the dog until it is tired, but to check that its ability to tolerate exercise is sufficient to ensure its welfare under normal conditions
- Colour of mucous membranes (especially ‘redness’ of the tongue and membranes in the mouth)
- Excessive respiratory noise, especially if associated with distress

Temperament
Dogs should show no signs of anxiety, timidity or aggression.

Affected Breeds
Each breed has specific conditions of concern and these can, as before, be grouped largely into conditions causing:
- Externally visible disease of the eye or eyelids, ocular discomfort, or pain. Conformational abnormalities associated with clinical signs will result in failure to pass the examination
- Lameness
- Dermatological disorders such as inflammation or evidence of previous infection
- Respiratory effort or noise, if associated with distress (at rest or with light exercise)
Bloodhound

The chief feature of concern is excessive skin wrinkling resulting in deep skin folds.
- Signs of dermatitis in skin folds
- Hair loss or scarring from previous dermatitis
- When associated with clinical signs, ectropion or entropion are considered to be conformational defects that will result in failure to pass the examination
- Lameness

Bulldog

The breed is prone to ocular and adnexal disease and respiratory distress. Obesity may also be noted and may contribute to signs of respiratory distress and overheating.
- When associated with clinical signs, ectropion or entropion are considered to be conformational defects that will result in failure to pass the examination
- Damage (scarring or ulceration) to the cornea caused by e.g. facial folds, distichiasis, ectopic cilia, poor eyelid anatomy, a prominent eye
- Respiratory difficulty
- Dermatitis associated with facial wrinkles or at the tail root due to a tightly ‘screwed’ tail
- Lameness

Dog de Bordeaux

Main predisposing feature is excessive facial wrinkling.
- When associated with clinical signs, ectropion or entropion are considered to be conformational defects that will result in failure to pass the examination
- Dermatitis associated with skin wrinkles
- Hair loss or scarring from previous dermatitis
- Lameness

German Shepherd Dog

The principal issue is exaggerated conformation causing over angulated croup, cow hocks, sickle hocks and ataxic movement. Temperament should also be considered.
- Timidity, aggression or anxiety which cause distress
- Ataxia (uncoordinated movement)
- Irregular gait
- Dogs unable to stand freely, and unsupported in any way, in structural balance whilst both rear pasterns are vertical
- Cow hocks
- Sickle hocks
Mastiff

Loose skin and wrinkling are the chief features of the breed resulting in clinical problems. Obesity is another factor considered to contribute to poor health and unsoundness in the breed.

- When associated with clinical signs, ectropion or entropion are considered to be conformational defects that will result in failure to pass the examination
- Clear evidence of previous eyelid surgery to correct a conformational defect
- Lameness
- Hind limb ataxia (uncoordinated movement)
- Signs of dermatitis in the skin folds

Neapolitan Mastiff

Loose skin and wrinkling, including poor eyelid anatomy, are the chief features of the breed resulting in clinical problems. Obesity is another factor considered to contribute to poor health and unsoundness in the breed.

- When associated with clinical signs, ectropion or entropion are considered to be conformational defects that will result in failure to pass the examination
- Clear evidence of eyelid surgery to correct a conformational defect
- Lameness
- Hind limb ataxia
- Signs of dermatitis in the skin folds

Pekingesen

A breed associated with ocular and adnexal problems. Corneal pathology is relatively common, considered to be due to mechanical damage from the facial folds, distichiasis, or medial lower eyelid entropion. Blinking may not be adequate because of the prominence of the eye, and this can result in exposure keratopathy and inadequate distribution of the tear film. They are also a breed associated with breathing difficulties.

- When associated with clinical signs; a prominent eye, eyelid, lash and hair abnormalities (including mechanical damage from the facial folds) and any indications of corneal damage
- Respiratory difficulty or noise, if associated with distress, at rest or with light exercise
- Inability to move effectively as a result of excessive coat or general lack of muscle tone or fitness
- Lameness

Pug

A breed associated with corneal pathology and breathing difficulties. The ocular problems are related to some or all of a prominent eye, medial lower eyelid entropion, inadequate blink and tear film distribution. Facial folds may impinge directly on the cornea and produce mechanical trauma.

- When associated with clinical signs, a prominent eye, eyelid or facial fold abnormalities and any indications of corneal damage
- Respiratory difficulty or noise, if associated with distress, at rest or with light exercise
- Dermatitis associated with tightly coiled or screw tail, or facial folds
- Hair loss or scarring from previous dermatitis
- Lameness
St Bernard

Skin folds around the head are a principal concern, resulting in poor eyelid conformation.
- When associated with clinical signs, ectropion or entropion are considered to be conformational defects that will result in failure to pass the examination
- Clear evidence of previous eyelid surgery to correct a conformational defect
- Hind limb ataxia (uncoordinated movement)
- Lameness
Guidance to Show Societies

Show Management Responsibility
• To ensure Vet Checks are carried out on BOB winners of all breeds listed as Category Three on Breed Watch (+AVNSC)
• To ensure Vet Checks are carried out as seamlessly as possible
• 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

Regulation Amendments
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.

Veterinary Health Check Process
The process will be carried out as follows:
• Best of Breed Selected
Award card handed out. However, after judging is completed it should be collected and retained by either a show official or the show secretary once the judge has completed and signed

• Designated official is to accompany exhibitor in their own time to the veterinary surgeon

• Exhibit passes check
Show Official gives exhibitor the signed award card and a copy of the completed vet check form and is permitted to enter the group competition
Society to send a copy of the Vet Check form to the Kennel Club with its show return

• Exhibit fails check
Show Official gives exhibitor a copy of the Vet Check form, and confirms his/her dog is ineligible to enter the group competition
Society to send the BOB award card and a copy of the Vet Check form to the Kennel Club with its show returns
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 - societies to advise the Kennel Club accordingly
- As far as possible, societies should accept requests for dogs that require Vet Checks for the purpose of Champion title confirmation
- The vet's decision is final

There are currently nine breeds which have been designated as Category Three on Breed Watch:

- Bloodhound
- Bulldog
- Dogue de Bordeaux
- German Shepherd Dog
- Mastiff
- Neapolitan Mastiff
- Pekingese
- Pug
- St. Bernard

Champion Title Checks

Confirmation of Champion Title
In addition, before the Champion title of any dog or bitch within these breeds can be confirmed, that dog will have to undergo a successful veterinary examination at a Group or General Championship Show. Regulation K2 refers (see below).

K2.a. and K2.b. Championship Qualifications
Any dog from a breed designated by the Kennel Club as Category Three on Breed Watch will not have its title of Champion confirmed until the dog has passed an examination by a General or Group Championship Show Veterinary Surgeon. The result of the examination shall be final.

The veterinary health check can be performed in advance of winning a 3rd CC or the Champion status can be kept pending until the check takes place at a future show.

It is hoped that General and Group Championship Show Societies will accommodate both Exhibitors and Non-Exhibitors who required their dog to be Vet Checked in order to confirm their dog’s Champion title.
Guidance to Exhibitors

It is expected that an Exhibitor will co-operate fully with this procedure. This move, along with the other health measures that we have put in place, will help the Kennel Club to ensure that the show ring is a positive lever for change in the world of dogs. The objective of this process is to improve canine health and protect the sport of dog showing.

Therefore, the Exhibitor should allow the examination to be carried out unhindered and without obstruction.

In January 2011, the Kennel Club announced that all dogs of the, high profile breeds, which win Best of Breed at Crufts 2012 and at General and Group Championship Shows after that, will need to pass a veterinary health check undertaken by the show veterinary surgeon before their Best of Breed awards are confirmed, and before they are allowed to continue to compete at the show. Regulation F(1)27.a. refers.

Eligibility for Group at a General or Group Championship Show (BIS)

F(1)27.a. 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.

Note: The Best of Breed/Best Any Variety Not Separately Classified award relevant to a breed listed as Category Three on Breed Watch will not be confirmed until the dog has passed an examination by the General and Group Championship Show Veterinary Surgeon.