



Search Canine Physical Examination Guide

Basic Canine Physical Examination Methods and Parameters for the Handler and Medic

These guidelines are designed to facilitate a detailed physical check of a canine during training, exercise, or deployment. These recommendations are to promote monitoring of canine health and detection of abnormalities so that veterinary professional attention can be sought for further evaluation, diagnostics and treatment.

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Physical Examination Normal Values Quick Guide

Temperature	Rectal/ Aural	100.0-102.5°F/38-39°C
Mentation	Observe, Handler opinion	'BAR' bright, alert, responds
Hydration	Feel gingival or lip MM Tent skin over neck or back	Moist mm Skin 'snaps' back
Mucous Membranes	Check color & CRT Gingival, inner lip, conjunctiva Prepuce, Vulva	Pink, >1 and < 2 seconds
Eyes	Chamber clarity, PLR Conjunctiva, Retinal exam	Clear, open, no discharge Pupils E/R (equal/responsive) D/I (direct, indirect)
Ears	Visual exam, odor Otosopic exam (challenging)	No discharge or malodor Tympanic membrane intact
Nose	Visual, Glass/tissue test Place before each nostril	Symmetrical, no discharge Airflow from each nostril
Throat/Oral	Lift lips, check teeth/gums Open mouth, check tongue	Teeth/gums intact, no blood No pain, ✓ tonsils, gag reflex
PLNs (Peripheral Lymph Nodes)	Palpate parotid, mandibular, prescap, axillary, popliteals	Small or non-palpable
Heart, Pulse	Auscultate heart left 5 th rib Femoral pulse inner thigh	70-140 bpm, no murmur Strong, synchronous to heart
Lungs, Respiration	Auscultate thorax over ribs Observe breathing	Clear lung sounds 15-30 breaths/min, no effort
Abdomen	Palpate spleen, GI, bladder	Non-painful, concave shape
Urogenital	♀: vulva, mammary glands ♂: prepuce, penis, scrotum	No swelling, discharge, pain, wound, blood
Integument	Observe and palpate skin Include paw pads	Good coat, no pain, wounds, swelling, excessive heat/cold
Rectal/Perineum	Observe area	No swelling, wounding, pain ♀: vagina/urethra ventrally ♂: prostate, urethra ventrally
Musculoskeletal	Observe gait, posture Palpate abnormalities	No lameness, swelling, pain or stiffness
Neurological	Mental state, seizures, symmetry Spinal pain, Limb use	BAR, visual, no spinal pain Normal reflexes