

Best Practices for Behavioral Testing of Detection Canine Candidates



TEST PARAMETERS

- Controlled environment that is novel to the dog
- Dedicated space clear of distractions for emotional reactivity testing (complete first)
- Separate area for reward/search testing (complete last)



TEST COMPONENTS



SCORING & INTERPRETATION

• Emotional reactivity battery • Acoustic blast • Animal-like statue • Mechanical/moving object	• FAIL = strong avoidance/refusal, requires prolonged time or handler support to recover/continue • PASS = Minimal reaction/rapid recovery across all tests
• Reward engagement • Tug-of-war • Retrieves with challenges/obstacles • Conflict between reward and distraction	• FAIL = Does not enthusiastically pursue toy reward, or relinquishes easily (unless reason is for resuming search) • PASS = Persistence in obtaining toy reward, independently interacts with toy
• Searches • Space should include both visually cluttered and barren areas • Hides should be within range of dog's natural ability while presenting challenges in sourcing by manipulating placement (e.g., height, depth) and odor conditions (e.g., high saturation, dynamic air currents)	• FAIL = requires continuous handler encouragement; arousal is excessive (panting, frantic movement, vocalizing) or absent (slow, wandering, uninterested) • PASS = Independent pursuit of odor source without requiring handler encouragement to remain engaged; ability to self-regulate across searches

