**Dog Massage Evaluation Criteria**

Handler Portion:

Handler may cover their knowledge portion of the badge check off in a verbal question/answer session or may put the answers in writing in their own words, without using copy/paste from the badge material.

The handler will need to demonstrate the different types of massage on their dog as well as create and explain a “post massage map” after a massage session on their dog.

If the handler has multiple dogs, they only need to do their knowledge portion once, but should be able to demo a variety of massage types on each of their dogs.

Dog portion:

The dog might be a bit tense at the start of the session, but should quickly relax its body and settle in for the remainder.

Dogs may not show any signs of unwillingness to be moved, touched, helped onto one side or the other if needed, or have all parts of the body touched and massaged or manipulated. “Ticklish” and/or “limp” are ok, but pulling away, trying to get away or avoid contact, fast movement of the snout toward the hand and signs of aggression are not allowed. A dog showing any of these signs will need additional training to pair touch/manipulation with good things to reduce the dog’s stress. The book “The Evolution of Charlie Darwin” by Beth Duman has excellent information on how to get a dog comfortable with touch and manipulation as may be needed for veterinary handling, massage and emergency care.

A dog that is constantly moving and/or rolling around may be trying to avoid the session and is clearly not fully relaxed and settled in. A reasonable amount of time may be taken to try to get the dog to relax before calling it quits and trying again later, perhaps after a potty break and some exercise.

The dog may lick the handler if it appears to be a “co-grooming” type of behavior and not stress related.

Because it’s the dog that earns the badge, the handler may not use a “substitute dog”. But if a handler has significant issues with their hands that prevent their use for proper massage, an alternate “handler” may be used and the handler can verbally describe the different techniques in such a way that the alternate handler can do them correctly.

The dog should be willing to respond correctly and willingly to the “lie on your side” cue just prior to the start of the massage and while on the mat/surface to be used for the massage.