



Dog Scouts of America Evaluation Criteria

Disabled Dog

PURPOSE: This badge serves the purpose of helping the handler to understand and prepare for the possibility of different types of disabilities while the dog is still healthy. It demonstrates that the handler has developed the knowledge of how disabilities may first present and how to mitigate them once a diagnosis has been determined. Through the learning process the handler will teach the dog different ways to improve the quality of life of the dog while managing potential disabilities. All behaviors must be taught to the dog using only positive training methods, shaping and operant conditioning and the dog must be able to perform the behaviors on cue.

DOG REQUIREMENTS: All dogs are eligible to earn this badge. A healthy dog must demonstrate the requirements as described on the check off sheet that cover a range of disabilities falling into the categories of orthopedic, neurological, sight impairment and hearing impairment. The dog also needs to demonstrate a minimum of 3 'touch' behaviors, where the dog responds with an action based on where on his body he was touched. Touch behaviors may apply to all of the different categories based on the situation. The number of required behaviors can be found on the Check Off Sheet.

A dog who is physically disabled may meet the badge requirements by focusing on behaviors respective to his disability/impairment but must demonstrate behaviors in other categories as able. For example, though it is not possible for a visually impaired or blind dog to learn sign language, the dog may well be able to show behaviors necessary for an orthopedic or neurologic disability, since as the dog ages a secondary disability may develop. The number of required behaviors can be found on the Check Off Sheet.

HANDLER REQUIREMENTS: The handler must demonstrate an understanding of signs and causes of common disabilities as well as exercises, equipment and human actions that lessen the experience for a physically disabled dog. Handler helps the dog learn to demonstrate methods of coping with a variety of potential physical disabilities. The safety and the physical/mental well-being of the dog must be a top priority. Any equipment used in training or demonstrating behaviors for this badge must be maintained in good condition during and the handler must not allow the dog to damage the equipment.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Necessary equipment varies depending on the behaviors being taught and/or demonstrated. Potential needs include a cart or walking wheels, a ladder and/or jump poles. The use of safety equipment is required as appropriate, such as a life jacket when a dog is demonstrating an activity in water.

PROCESS: Much of the knowledge needed for this badge can be conveyed to the evaluator in either an oral or written format, however it must be clear that the information is not simply being recited from memory or cut and pasted from supporting documents for the badge. Information on how the handler determines his/her criteria for making difficult end of life decisions is quite personal with few right or wrong answers. Evaluators will be especially sensitive when asking handlers to convey this information as it might prove to be very emotional for some handlers.

The evaluator will ask the handler/dog team to demonstrate the behaviors that have been taught for each disability category and for touch behaviors. Dogs currently living with a diagnosed disability may be evaluated differently as described on the Check Off Sheet based on the dog's impairment and ability. For



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both healthy and disabled dogs, it must be clear to the evaluator that the dog is responding to the cue and not to any other unintentional cue on the part of the handler. As some exercises may be stressful or mentally draining for the dog, breaks are encouraged between behavior demonstrations. This is especially true for dogs already living with disabilities.

ALLOWED:

- Treats or toys used as rewards
- Repeated cues, within reason
- Time outs between exercises
- Substitutions for disabled dogs

NOT ALLOWED:

- Luring behaviors
- Excessive cues, or 'nagging' the dog
- Any behavior that damages equipment