






SDF Canine Candidate Evaluation Process

The evaluation process was developed to select the canine candidates most likely to succeed in SDF's disaster search dog training program. It is based on canine testing standards, policies and procedures originally developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

CANINES CONSIDERED BY SDF FOR OUR TRAINING PROGRAM

-  Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, Border Collies, German Shepherds, Belgian Malinois, or any mix of these breeds. Other breeds are considered on a case-by-case basis.
-  1 to 2 years of age.
-  Intense focus and drive to hunt and possess a toy.

SUBMITTING AN EVALUATION TO SDF

Canine Candidate Evaluations must be recorded in their entirety. Recordings must be uploaded to YouTube or submitted via email to the Director of SDF Recruitment before the canine will be considered for SDF's Canine Training Program. No written evaluations will be considered without accompanying video.

Dog's Name: _____

Dog's Breed: _____

Toy Used: _____

Dog's Age: _____

Evaluator(s): _____

1. GENERAL BEHAVIOR

Search Dog candidates must be resilient to a number of stimuli in new environments and scenarios, they must take everything “in stride”. In general, candidates should exhibit a bold/confident posture in nearly every environment. A dog will most likely not be considered for SDF’s program if the dog exhibits any of the following behavior when around new people and environments:

- 🐾 Reluctance to approach or engage with unfamiliar people
- 🐾 Significant distraction by unfamiliar objects/urban clutter
- 🐾 Shy or overly submissive behavior
- 🐾 Apprehensive or nervous behaviors in new or familiar environments (i.e. crouching or cowering)
- 🐾 Biting or nipping at people or other dogs
- 🐾 Rigid posture around people
- 🐾 Biting or nipping at people or other dogs

2. AGGRESSION TEST

Purpose: To determine if the dog shows aggression toward people or other dogs.

How-to: Pack Walk with other neutral dogs.

		<i>Human</i>	<i>Dog</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed, soft body <input type="checkbox"/> Ignores other dog <input type="checkbox"/> Offers a play bow <input type="checkbox"/> Excited <input type="checkbox"/> Indifferent or friendly <input type="checkbox"/> Tail wagging or relaxed	YES		
<input type="checkbox"/> Fearful, worried <input type="checkbox"/> Lunges at other dog with rigid, stiff body, snarl or growl <input type="checkbox"/> Intensely focused/hyper-focused on other dog <input type="checkbox"/> Growling <input type="checkbox"/> Tail tucked, trembling, crouching or moving away <input type="checkbox"/> Rigid posture, growling, barking hackles up	NO		




3. RETRIEVE TEST

Purpose: To determine the level of a dog's prey and play drive, evaluate his intensity and desperation toward a toy as well as his willingness to work with people.

Please note: the retrieve test can lead directly into the **Toy Possession Test** (please reference on next page)

Set-up: Any open area with the dog's favorite toy.

How-to:

-  Use the dog's favorite toy
-  Throw the toy 5 times at a distance of 50 to 75 feet
-  Note what dog does with each throw

SCORING




<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Excited and focused and maintains possession of the toy during retrieves<input type="checkbox"/> Intensity in the chase is shown, fast quick movements.<input type="checkbox"/> Frantically chases toy<input type="checkbox"/> Exhibits <i>desperation</i> for the toy<input type="checkbox"/> Runs quickly to retrieve toy and carries it back to handler without dropping unless in anticipation of more play<input type="checkbox"/> Does not leave the play area	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Mildly excited<input type="checkbox"/> Distracted and unfocused<input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally comes back or looks to handler without toy<input type="checkbox"/> Walks or trots toward the toy after the throw<input type="checkbox"/> Retrieves toy but drops due to lack of interest when returning to handler<input type="checkbox"/> Will not retrieve toy once it's found	NO
<p>Notes:</p>	

4. TOY POSSESSION TEST

Purpose: To determine if the dog's focus on his toy overrides other distractions. Determine level of *internal motivation* for toy. This should be done immediately following the 5 retrieves.

Set-up: Any open area with the dog's favorite toy.

How-to:

-  Handler performs the 5 retrieve test with the dog.
-  After the 5th time the ball is thrown, everyone around ignores the dog for 1 minute.
-  No verbal or physical encouragement is given. Do not move – ANY movement encourages a dog

SCORING

<p><u>Engaged with toy is defined as:</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Holds toy in mouth for the full 1 minute</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plays with, carries or guards toy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attempts to get people to play (pushes toy at person, jumps on them, barks at them)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Engaged with toy for the entire minute</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Maintains focus on toy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lays down and keeps toy at feet, occasionally chews on toy</p>	YES
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Does not engage with toy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Engaged with toy for less than 1 minute</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Drops toy to show interest in something else (sniffing ground, wandering off)</p>	NO
<p>Notes:</p>	

5. FIELD HUNT TEST

Purpose: To determine the dog's ability to hunt and evaluate the strength of desire to hunt.

Set-up:

- 🐾 Find a new, unfamiliar area for the hunt containing tall grass, wooded area, debris or under objects (garage, stock room, several vehicles)
- 🐾 The dog must not be able to clear areas or find the toy visually. The area must be a minimum of 25x25ft

How-to:

- 🐾 Use the dog's favorite toy
- 🐾 Ideally, an unfamiliar person should handle the dog
- 🐾 Each time, the dog should see the toss of the toy
- 🐾 Praise is ok after the find but NO physical or verbal help can be given during the hunt
- 🐾 It's not necessary that the dog finds the toy, but must show determination hunting for it
- 🐾 Dog should be spun in a circle before released to hunt for the toy.
- 🐾 Toy must be thrown into a different spot on each toss.

There are a minimum of three tosses:

- 🐾 1st – Throw the toy into the brush and immediately release the dog once the toy has landed
- 🐾 2nd – Throw toy in brush. Hold the dog for **15** seconds spinning dog once around -then release.
- 🐾 3rd – Throw toy in brush. Hold the dog for **1 minute** spinning dog once -then release.

FIELD HUNT SCORING

<input type="checkbox"/> Hunts for the toy at a fast pace, covers ground quickly, a run <input type="checkbox"/> Searches area quickly and locates toy or searches until the end of time limit <input type="checkbox"/> Hunts desperately/frantically <input type="checkbox"/> Stays focused, is not distracted by other smells, sights or sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Retrieves toy/carries back to handler without dropping (unless in anticipation of more play) <input type="checkbox"/> Never leaves search area and stays focused <input type="checkbox"/> Dog shows frustration during the delay release <input type="checkbox"/> Dog builds in intensity on each throw/hunt <input type="checkbox"/> Dog leaves handler in an explosive manner, charges off once released <input type="checkbox"/> Takes a direct route into hunting area, linear	YES
<input type="checkbox"/> Does not hunt for toy or stops hunting for toy <input type="checkbox"/> Repeatedly comes back or looks to handler for help <input type="checkbox"/> Will not retrieve toy once it's found <input type="checkbox"/> Hunts at a slow pace; a walk or trot <input type="checkbox"/> Retrieves toy but drops due to lack of interest when returning to handler <input type="checkbox"/> Becomes distracted during the hunt by other smells, sights or sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Dog doesn't leave handler at a run	NO
Notes:	


6. RUBBLE TEST

Purpose: To determine the dog's nerve strength and emotional stability when placed under stress in an uncomfortable and unfamiliar environment. The rubble pile should be large enough that the dog can walk around on top of it and not easily jump off and on again, thus always feeling safe. The pile must have voids.



HUNT ON RUBBLE

Set-up: The handler, dog and two assistants begin the exercise on the ground at the edge of the rubble. Select a start point that allows the canine to directly enter the rubble safely.

How-to: While the handler holds dog on a lead, the assistant on flat ground gets the dog's attention, then throws the toy to the 2nd assistant on the rubble. That assistant places the toy at least 10 yards from the perimeter, in specific locations as described below.

-  1st Immediate Release, toy in obvious find on a stable surface

All participants relocate to a different start point at least 15 yards from first 2 throws:

-  2nd 15 second delay release, toy in a depression in the rubble
-  3rd 60 second delay release, toy at least 20 yards from the perimeter of rubble

RUBBLE HUNT SCORING

<input type="checkbox"/> Enters rubble by most direct route at a run and with little or no delay <input type="checkbox"/> Hunts for toy at fast pace, run only occasionally breaking to a trot due to footing or working odor <input type="checkbox"/> Little or no hesitation on surface changes <input type="checkbox"/> Searches area quickly and desperately <input type="checkbox"/> Never gives up <input type="checkbox"/> Stays focused, is not distracted by other smells, sights or sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Does not avoid rubble <input type="checkbox"/> Retrieves toy and carries it back to handler or off the rubble without dropping toy (unless toy is dropped in anticipation of more play) <input type="checkbox"/> Never leaves search area and stays focused	YES
<input type="checkbox"/> Does not enter rubble/tentatively enters rubble <input type="checkbox"/> Does not take most direct route onto rubble, looks for alternatives by running around the rubble <input type="checkbox"/> Does not hunt for the toy <input type="checkbox"/> Covers rubble at a slow pace. A walk or trot. <input type="checkbox"/> Becomes distracted by other smells, sights or sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Repeatedly comes back to look at handler or to return to handler <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids surface changes (e.g. concrete to pallets), unstable or unpleasant surfaces <input type="checkbox"/> Moves slowly and tentatively when surfaces change (e.g. concrete to pallets) <input type="checkbox"/> Repeatedly traverses same route <input type="checkbox"/> Slow and tentative when returning to the handler <input type="checkbox"/> Will not retrieve toy once it is located/retrieves toy but drops toy due to lack of interest	NO

Notes:

7. NOISE SENSITIVITY

Set-Up: Canine on lead with a handler and toy. Small metal water bucket or metal food bowl.

How-To: While handler is holding the canine on lead, the assistant engages the canine with excitement and play with a toy; tugging with the canine is best. While engaged in play with the canine, the assistant drops the metal bucket/bowl onto the ground.





<input type="checkbox"/> Little or no reaction to noise. <input type="checkbox"/> Disengages with toy, but quickly re-engages with little encouragement or enticement.	YES
<input type="checkbox"/> Obvious fear of noise; shuts down <input type="checkbox"/> Disengages play and does not recover quickly	NO
Notes:	

8. FRUSTRATION TEST

Purpose: To determine if the dog's frustration threshold is low enough to produce a naturally strong bark alert.

Set-up: If a dog does not exhibit clear frustration during hunt tests (barking, whining, lunging) perform the frustration test behind a fence. Give the dog adequate rest following the other tests before beginning frustration. Use any 6' chain link panel fence and the dog's favorite toy. Dog may be on a loose leash behind fencing.

How-to:

-  Place dog in run or fenced area
-  Stand outside and tease with toy
-  Toss toy over fence when dog barks
-  Video the entire process

SCORING

<input type="checkbox"/> Excited and focused; barks quickly <input type="checkbox"/> Excited and focused; tries to jump on fence to get toy, then barks <input type="checkbox"/> Whining, whimpering, clearly frustrated for toy <input type="checkbox"/> Digging for toy <input type="checkbox"/> Biting fence <input type="checkbox"/> Throwing themselves at the toy <input type="checkbox"/> Desperate to gain access to toy	YES
<input type="checkbox"/> Looks for help from people <input type="checkbox"/> Breaks focus and becomes distracted <input type="checkbox"/> Disinterested <input type="checkbox"/> Requires a high level of handler engagement to maintain focus on the toy <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Defensive	NO
Notes:	