

Medical Requirements for Green Detector Dogs: What you Need to Know

There are questions that every breeder and every trainer ask before having their first dogs evaluated for working dog contracts. “What do the tests look like?” “Which toys should I make sure the dog is good with?” And one of the biggest is related to medical testing: “What medical testing has to be done and when does it need to be completed?” As breeders, we know that OFA requires dogs to be 24 months of age before they will certify the results for hips and elbows, but many of the pups being tested are under 24 months of age. So, what do we do, and when should we do it? Let’s break these requirements down through different periods of the cycle of a green detection dog so you can make informed decisions on the timing of health testing.

Breeding

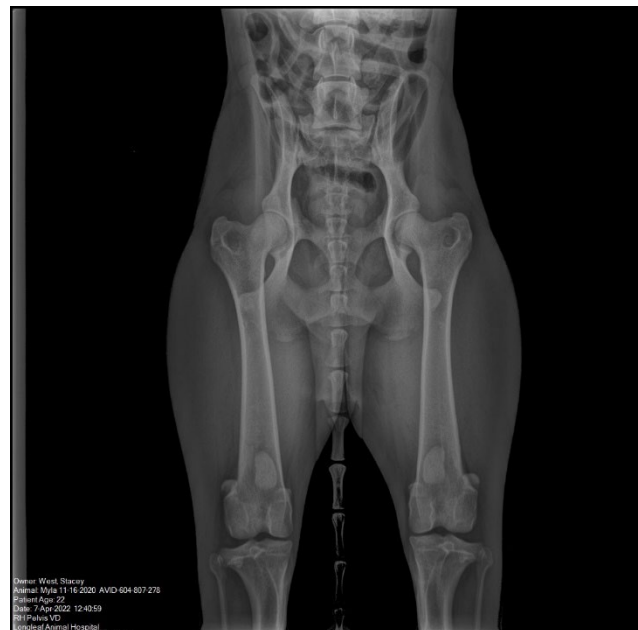
As most breeders understand, beginning the planning of a litter with parents who have been health tested is the right place to start. Even though there are no guarantees that all the offspring in the litter will pass all health testing in the future, starting with health-tested parents stacks the odds in your favor. What tests should you do? When in doubt, follow the [AKC parent club’s](#) recommendations for health testing for your breed.

Vaccinations for Puppies

Many breeders prefer to give their own puppy vaccinations to manage litter related expenses. Regardless of whether you buy vaccines at a farm store or through your vet, once your pup gets old enough to be evaluated as a working dog, government veterinarians generally only recognize vaccines given and documented by other licensed veterinarians. Many green dogs often require a significant requirement for boosters by a licensed veterinarian of the standard vaccines given to younger pups because of the requirement for veterinarian-administered vaccines. This adds costs to either the breeder/trainer, or to the vendor who has the contract with the government. Furthermore, for some federal contracts, there is a requirement for boosters to be given prior to testing if the expiration of previous vaccines falls shortly after evaluation/procurement exams.

Hips, Elbows and Spine

Requirements vary from agency to agency with regard to submission of digital radiographs of hips, elbows and spine. Hips and elbows generally follow the standard OFA views and good positioning is critical to ensuring the best evaluation possible. There can be very different conclusions when it comes to the spine, and in particular, transitional vertebra. For example, TSA and DOD will always fail a dog who has transitional vertebra (TV), while CBP will only fail



for Transitional Vertebra if there are additional changes associated with the TV. The graph below should help you see the differences between agencies for routine medical requirements.

	TSA/DOD	CBP	Private Vendors	Local/State Law Enforcement
Vaccinations	Normal Vaccines, documented in Medical Packet submitted with digital radiographs	Normal Vaccines + contract specific Vaccine, submitted with Medical Packet on day of delivery, reviewed before testing starts	Normal Vaccines, preferably given by a licensed veterinarian	Normal Vaccines, delivered with medical packet after testing/selection
Hips, Elbows and Spine	Submitted 10 Days ahead of Testing for review	Vendor Conducts prior to testing, Government Vet repeats on dogs selected	Breeder may submit with dog, or vendor may conduct their own testing	Submitted after selection with the medical packet and written health guarantee
Transitional Vertebra	Automatic Failure	Passing, unless additional changes associated with the TV	Depends on the contract	Not Normally Evaluated

When is the Right Time?

Understanding the requirements of the agency that will be testing your dog will help you make a better decision on when to have everything completed. For vaccines, use a licensed veterinarian and stay up to date on routine vaccines. It will save you time and money in the long run. For radiographs, make sure you start with a veterinarian that regularly takes quality radiographs for submission to OFA and/or PennHip. These veterinarians understand the importance of positioning for the best images possible. Next, find out whether the vendor you are selling to/through will conduct their own radiographs, or they require you to submit radiographs with your dog's medical packet. Finally, as trainers, we know where our dog's training level is at. If you're confident you have a rock star that agencies will want in the next few weeks, then go ahead and shoot the radiographs. If your pup is going to take a few more months of training to be ready for testing, maintain some patience on completing those radiographs. It might keep you from doing them twice!

Additional Information

The last part of this discussion revolves around the quality of the information you share with the vendors or agencies interested in buying your dog. First, include a copy of your AKC registration certificate or AKC litter registration form for your pup. Date of birth, sire and dam are basic information that many agencies and vendors want/need for their records. Next, share a copy of your pup's vaccination history with the contact information for the veterinary hospital that gave the vaccinations, including rabies information and microchip number. Microchips will be scanned prior to evaluation to make sure they are testing the dog that matches the medical records and radiographs. Finally, submit digital radiographs that can be forwarded for review by government veterinarians. Radiographs will often have to be repeated if only digital pictures are submitted. Also, make sure the appropriate information is included on the radiographs, including the microchip number of your dog.

As always, there are very few "always" and/or "nevers" in the working dog world, and the medical requirements vary from agency to agency and contract to contract. Make informed decisions throughout the process and don't be afraid to ask questions if you're not sure.