



Living Creatures Ministry Certification Test

Teams that complete and pass this test will not be eligible to receive their certification until they have completed 3 LCM visits or events with an evaluator or certified LCM handler/animal team.

Test Item 1: Temperament Test

This item demonstrates that the animal has the proper temperament to be a therapy animal. The LCM Temperament Test will be re-administered in its entirety at this time.

Test Item 2: Accepting a Friendly Stranger

This item demonstrates that the animal will allow a friendly stranger to approach and converse with its handler.

Test: Evaluator approaches handler. They shake hands and exchange small talk. All animals must be on leash. Dogs must be on the floor at handler's side. Other animals may be held or on the floor.

Pass: Animal must remain under control throughout the interaction. The animal must appear relaxed, happy, or excited.

Fail: Animal shows resentment, aggression, shyness, animal lunges forward to greet evaluator. Handler uses excessive corrections to control animal.

Test Item 3: Sitting Nicely for Petting

This item demonstrates that the animal will allow touching from a stranger while with its handler.

Test: Upon completion of Test Item 2, evaluator will ask for permission to pet animal. Once permission is given, the evaluator will pet with animal on its head and body.

Pass: The animal may appear happy with contact, lean into/move forward into contact, animal may stand to receive pets. Animal remains under control.

Fail: Animal displays shyness or aggression. Animal avoids contact. Animal lunges or rushes forward. Animal is not under control of handler.

Test Item 4: Appearance and Grooming

This test demonstrates that the animal is well-groomed and will allow handling for examinations or grooming.

Test: The evaluator examines dog to ensure it has proper weight, is clean, alert, healthy, etc. Evaluator lightly examines ears and gently picks up each foot. Evaluator brushes animal's back with brush provided by handler.

Pass: Animal accepts inspection and grooming. Animal may move around during exam, within reason. The handler may give direction, praise, and encouragement to the animal as needed.

Fail: Animal requires restraint to be examined. Animal actively avoids brushing. Animal is out of handler's control at any time during the exam. Animal displays any aggression.

Test Item 5: Walking Through a Crowd

This item demonstrates that the handler will be in control of the animal during visits and events.

Test: The animal and handler pass by and walk closely to at least 3 different people. All animals must be on leash. Dogs must walk next to the handler. All other animals may walk next to handler or be carried. One crowd person should be carrying something (purse, backpack, computer bag) and one crowd person should be using medical equipment (walker, wheelchair, cane, etc). If one of the people is a child, the child must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. The evaluator may be one of the 3 people comprising the crowd. The animal/handler team must turn left, turn right, and do an about face during this exercise.

Pass: While the animal doesn't need to be perfectly aligned with handler, its position must leave no doubt that the handler is in control of the animal. The animal may not constantly strain at the leash, although a tight leash may occasionally be permitted. The dog may pay attention to people, smells, etc, but this attention should not cause it to strain excessively against the leash.

Fail: Animal pulling excessively on leash. Handler not having control of the animal. Animal jumps out of the handler's arms or requires excessive restraint in the handler's arms if being carried. Animal jumps on people in the crowd or strains towards them excessively. Animal displays aggression or shyness.

Test Item 6: Door Manners

This item demonstrates that the animal can move calmly through tight spaces such as doorways and that the handler can control the animal with something in the other hand.

Test: The handler holds a travel mug or water bottle full of water, opens door, and walks through calmly with animal.

Pass: Animal proceeds calmly through the door without causing handler to spill. Animal may pass through door first and wait patiently for handler, wait calmly for handler to pass through door first, or pass through door with handler if physically feasible.

Fail: Animal darts or lunges through door. Animal causes handler to spill water. Animal strains against the leash once through door or pulls backward/avoids door. Animal requires excessive restraint if carried. Handler uses excessive force to keep animal calm/still.

Test Item 7: Sit & Down Until Released

This item demonstrates that the animal understands both sit and down as implied stay commands. The animal must hold all commands until released.

Test: The evaluator will ask the handler to demonstrate that their animal can sit on command. The animal must hold the sit for at least 5 seconds before release. The evaluator will ask the handler to demonstrate that their animal can lay down on command. The animal must hold the down for at least 5 seconds before release.

Pass: Animal sits and holds sit, lays down and holds down upon command. Voice, hand, and gentle leash cues may be used. Animal does not break from commands until release cue is given. Handler may remind animal to stay, but not excessively.

Fail: Animal breaks from command before released. Handler uses excessive force to get animal into position. Handler repeats commands or reminders excessively.

Test Item 8: Prolonged Stay & Recall

This item demonstrates that the animal has a firm grasp of stay and recall.

Test: Handler tells animal to stay. Animal may be in a sit, down, or stand, but must hold that position until released. Handler walks 20 ft away from animal, releases animal, and recalls animal.

Pass: Animal holds position until released, comes to handler in a timely manner, and sits or lays down in front of handler when it arrives. Handlers may remind animal to stay and encourage animal during recall, but not excessively.

Fail: Animal breaks from position before release, animal does not come when called or takes an excessive amount of time to go to handler. Animal does not sit or lay down in front of handler when it arrives. Handler uses leash/long line to reel in animal. Handler reminds animal to stay excessively.

Test Item 9: Tuck

This item demonstrates that an animal can wait calmly under a chair or table while the handler is seated. This command will be useful at events or visits with limited space and in a variety of other situations.

Test: Handler takes a seat and directs animal to “tuck” under their chair or the table where they are seated. Animal maintains a sit or down in that position for 2 minutes and until released.

Pass: Animal remains calmly tucked under chair or table. Handler may remind animal to stay. Handler may use leash, hand, or voice cues. Animal may switch from sit to down or vice versa.

Fail: Animal refuses to go under furniture. Animal breaks from position before being released. Handler uses excessive force to get animal into position.

Test Item 10: Leave It

This item demonstrates that an animal can navigate around an item without grabbing or licking it. This skill will be especially important for nursing home or hospital visits if the team encounters medical waste or medications on the ground, but may also be used in a large variety of situations.

Test: All animals must be leashed and on the ground. Animal walks by food item and follows handler’s instruction to leave it.

Pass: Animal walks calmly by food item. Handler may use voice, hand, or minimal leash cues.

Fail: Animal growls or reacts aggressively to leave it cue. Animal lunges towards food item. Animal eats, grabs, or licks food item. Animal strains towards food item while walking past. Handler uses excessive force.

Test Item 11: Reaction to Another Animal

This item demonstrates that an animal will be able to remain calm during group visits or events or when it encounters another animal during a visit or event.

Test: Two handlers and their animals approach each other from about 20 feet apart. Handlers shake hands, exchange greetings, and continue along their path. All animals must be on leash. Dogs must be on floor near handler's side. Other animals may be on the floor or in their handler's arms. The evaluator may handle an animal or two animal/handler teams that are being tested may participate.

Pass: Animal shows no more than a casual interest in other animal/handler. Animal may move/sniff towards other animal, but must halt before reaching other animal/handler. Animal must remain calmly at handler's side or in handler's arms during greeting. Animal moves forward calmly while handlers continue along their paths.

Fail: Animal strains excessively towards other animal/handler. Animal lunges at other animal/handler. Animal is overly excited about/interested in other animal/handler. Animal strains back towards other animal/handler as handlers continue along their paths. Animal displays fear or aggression.

Test Item 12: Supervised Separation

This test item demonstrates that an animal can be left in the presence of a trusted person and will maintain its training and manners. This may be necessary if the handler needs to use the restroom or in case of an emergency.

Test: Evaluator offers to watch handler's animal. The handler will step out of sight for 2 minutes. The evaluator may speak to animal and/or pet it, but not excessively.

Pass: Animal waits calmly with evaluator. Animal may calmly look around for handler. Animal may change positions.

Fail: Animal pulls on the leash continually. Animal exhibits signs of stress, including but not limited to: excessive panting, pacing, pulling on leash, whining, crying, elimination. Animal appears agitated. Animal displays aggression.

Note: If the animal demonstrates extreme stress, anxiety, etc the test should be immediately terminated. The handler should seek out the help of a professional trainer to address this issue.

Aggression during any part of the certification test immediately disqualifies the animal from the program. Animals with aggression should be directed to seek out professional behavioral modification.

The Pass/Fail descriptions do not encompass every possible reaction. The evaluator should use these as a guideline when determining whether the animal has passed or failed the test item.

Animals may retake the certification test in 6 months if they fail for reasons other than aggression or failing the temperament portion.

Reminder: Animal/handler teams that complete and pass this test must still complete 3 visits or events with an evaluator or certified LCM team before they are eligible to receive LCM certification.