



Living Creatures Ministry Temperament Test

This test is to be administered to all animal/handler teams interested in becoming part of the Living Creatures Ministry (LCM) program. No LCM training will be provided until this test has been completed and passed.

General Observation

LCM strives to have program animals that have a friendly, easy-going personality. This test looks for animals with those traits.

Test: Handler, animal, and evaluator enter a quiet room. Animal is first allowed to acclimate to the room on leash, and then the leash is removed. Evaluator ignores animal unless animal initiates contact.

Pass: An easy-going animal will immediately come to check out the evaluator: sniffing, asking for attention, excited and/or relaxed behaviors.

Fail: Animal keeps a distance, sniffs evaluator but prefers to stay away, animal hides or actively avoids evaluator, animal exhibits fearful or tense body language, aggression

Social Drive

Therapy animals must enjoy therapy work to be a part of the LCM program. Animals that are too focused on their owner or avoidant of strangers are not a good fit for therapy work.

Test: Animal is on leash at handler's side, but at ease (released from any commands such as sit or down). Evaluator sits or crouches on ground in front of handler and gently coaxes animal forwards by clapping hands, patting legs, etc.

Pass: Animal eagerly approaches evaluator with relaxed or excited body language. Animal happily receives petting.

Fail: Animal stays by handler, refusing to move forward. Animal approaches hesitantly with fearful, tense, or anxious body language. Animal tolerates petting or reacts aggressively to petting.

Noise Sensitivity

Animals must be able to handle loud noises with ease for success as a therapy animal. Inability to cope with thunder, fireworks, loud clanging, popping balloons, etc will make an animal an ineffective therapy animal.

Test: Make a loud noise 5-10 ft away from the animal (drop a pan or metal food bowl, knock over a folded metal folding chair, etc) when the animal is looking in a different direction.

Pass: Animal startles but recovers quickly. Ideally, animal notices but barely even reacts.

Fail: Cringes in fear and won't stop trembling, urinates in fear, tries to bolt out of the room out of fear. Displays aggression.

Note: Absolutely no reaction may indicate deafness. Please contact a veterinarian for further testing.

Petting All Over

While LCM visits and events will aim for structured greetings to pups, exceptions always occur. Animals should be comfortable being pet all over.

Test: Evaluator pets animal on all limbs, head, belly, back, and touches tail.

Pass: Animal enjoys handling, remaining relaxed and/or excited during handling.

Fail: Animal tolerates or reacts negatively to handling. Animal is tense, never relaxes, growls, snaps, or removes itself from the interaction.

Body Sensitivity

Animals must be able to deal with unexpected touches such as a paw or tail being stepped on or being bumped into by a wheelchair to be effective as part of a therapy team. Appropriate reactions may save a toddler that reacts poorly near a dog.

Inappropriate reactions will not be allowed in the LCM program.

Test: While sitting next to or holding animal in lap, evaluator will pinch skin between toes or other similar area on the animal.

Pass: Withdraw limb, yelp, or move away, but return to/forgives evaluator almost immediately. Allows petting or handling by the evaluator afterwards.

Fail: Overreaction – the animal flees with shrill protests, avoids evaluator, remains leery of evaluator afterwards. Displays aggression.

Play

Animals in the LCM program must be comfortable enough to exhibit normal behaviors in most situations. Therapy animals also must be eager to please/engage with humans. Willingness to play is required for therapy animals.

Test: Evaluator attempts to engage animal in a game with a toy. Toys may be provided by evaluator or brought from home by handler.

Pass: Animal eagerly fetches, tugs, bats at, or similarly engages with toy. Body language is happy – relaxed or excited. Noises such as barking and play-growls are allowed, but shouldn't be excessive.

Fail: No interest in toys. Plays with toys independently, but won't engage with evaluator. Requires extra coaxing to play with toys. Guards toys. Demand barks excessively. Displays any aggression.

Aggression during any part of the temperament 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 re-take the temperament test in 12 months if they fail for reasons other than aggression. 3 temperament test failures permanently disqualifies an animal from participation in the LCM program.