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Step 3: Team Evaluation

Overview of the Team Evaluation Process

The Team Evaluation process evaluates the animal/handler team, how well the handler interprets and manages the animal's behavior, and how well the animal responds to the handler.

Team evaluations are performed by Delta-licensed Team Evaluators. There are 2 parts:

1. **Pet Partners Skills Test (PPST)** – shows whether the animal can be controlled by you and follow basic commands. During the PPST, you will be assessed on how you interact with the evaluator, the evaluator's assistants, the animal, and the environment around you.

To test basic good behavior skills, animals and their handlers complete the PPST. This test was modeled, with permission, after the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen (CGC) Test. Health care equipment, such as wheelchairs and walkers, has been added to the test. Skills are evaluated for how well the team can manage in an unfamiliar setting, such as a nursing home, hospital, school, etc. There are 12 items in the PPST.

The PPST is also used for screening cats and other animals. These animals and very small dogs do not perform all of the test items in the same way. For example, instead of walking on a leash, rabbits and cats must show that they can be carried in a basket or in the handler's arms.

PPST Requirements

- As in the CGC, food treats cannot be used during the test.
- The team may be given up to 3 attempts to successfully complete skills of the PPST, but only if the mistake is due to handler error.

2. **Pet Partners Aptitude Test (PPAT)** – designed to simulate conditions that may be encountered on a visit. This screening helps determine the most appropriate environment for you and your animal. Many people compare this to a temperament test. During the PPAT, you will be assessed on how well you interact with the evaluator and evaluator's assistants as you simulate being on a visit. They will be acting as though they are in a facility. Your interactions may be in the form of questions, responses to the evaluator and evaluator's comments, eye contact, smiling, head nodding, directing the animal to interact, or other verbal and nonverbal methods of communicating.

The Delta Society® Pet Partners Aptitude Test (PPAT) determines if you and your animal have the ability, capacity, desire, and potential for participating in animal-assisted activities (AAA) and animal-assisted therapy (AAT) programs. This part of the evaluation is similar to what many people would call a temperament test. Delta did not use the word "temperament" because so many people think that animals are born with a certain temperament and it can never be changed. We know that with training, many animals can learn to be reliable. For this reason, we use the word "aptitude" to suggest that the test applies to the animal's ability or potential for AAA/AAT. The PPAT also evaluates the aptitude of the animal/handler team.

The PPAT is based on research. To develop the test, over 600 qualified evaluators of visiting animals were surveyed. The people surveyed received a list of the 35 most frequently used items on temperament tests from all over the country. Many of those who responded to the survey stressed that the aptitude test should be functional and resemble a visit. There are 10 parts to the PPAT.

The PPAT is a combination of scenarios in which the individual exercises flow from one to another. The order of the exercises allows for escalation of stressors during testing.

During the PPAT, the handler and animal should interact (i.e., role play) with the evaluator and assistants as though they are people being visited at a facility. The handler should be able to work with the animal while at the same time interacting socially with the "client" (evaluator and assistants) as if on a visit.

Unlike obedience competitions, you and your animal do not have to perform the exercises with precision to pass the evaluation. You are also encouraged to talk to your animal during the entire evaluation. The main emphasis is that the animal is under control.

One of the goals of the Pet Partners Program is to ensure that we can all be proud of the visiting teams because they are safe and reliable. The evaluation process gives a complete picture of each handler/animal team. This process is the safest way to identify acceptable visiting teams.

After you have passed the PPST and PPAT, the Team Evaluator will give you a signed and dated copy of your test forms for you to include when you submit your completed Registration Packet to Delta Society.

The “Pet Partners Team Training Course” provides complete and more detailed information.

Please Note: At no time will your animal be put in a situation that is dangerous to the animal's welfare. The Delta-licensed Team Evaluators who conduct the PPST and PPAT are trained and learn that the well-being of animals comes first, no matter what. At no point during the evaluation will animals be hurt or intentionally frightened. The PPAT is designed to resemble an animal-assisted activities/animal-assisted therapy (AAA/AAT) visit with situations that might occur when the animal goes on a visit. If you are uncomfortable with or unsure of what is going on during the evaluation, please let the evaluator know. You are encouraged to be your animal's advocate.

Team Evaluation Requirements

Please refer to the “**Pet Partners Team Training Course**” for the complete list of requirements and more detailed information.

General

- Both the animal and the handler should be groomed and/or dressed appropriately as if they were going on a volunteer visit.
- The handler must show the animal's current rabies certificate.
- All animals must be wearing a collar/harness and be on lead at all times in the test area.
- Animals such as cats, rabbits, and guinea pigs are encouraged to be carried in a basket and/or on a towel and birds in cages. These animals should be carried such that their urine or droppings will not fall on the floor or the person being visited.
- Dogs trained to aggressively protect and/or encouraged to actively bite, even as a component of a dog sport (e.g., bite work that is part of Schutzhund) will not be evaluated.

Equipment

Acceptable equipment:

- Well-fitted buckle, quick-release connection, or snap closure collars or harnesses made of leather or fabric.
- Martingales (i.e., limited slip) and halters (e.g., Gentle Leader, Promise, Snoot Loop, Halti).
- Metal buckles, slip rings, and D-rings are acceptable.
- All leather or fabric leashes, no more than 6 feet in length.

Unacceptable equipment:

- Metal collars and harnesses, including martingales with metal links.
- Slip collars of any type.
- Special training collars such as "pinch," "spike," electric, or spray collars.
- Metal chain and retractable leashes (e.g., Flexi-leash).

Animals with Disabilities

There are several Pet Partner animals that have physical disabilities. If your animal has a disability that may require accommodations during the evaluation, please discuss these with the evaluator before the evaluation.

- The team will complete all required exercises in the PPST and PPAT.
- The animal's veterinarian, in consultation with the handler, will determine if the animal is physically able to participate in the evaluation and AAA/AAT as part of the health examination to be a Pet Partner.
- The evaluator will assess the team as he or she would any other team.

When to Wait until Another Day to Be Evaluated

- Your animal is in season. At the Team Evaluator's discretion, the animal *may* be tested at the end of the day.
- Your animal has an infection, open sores, wounds, or stitches. Wait until the animal is healed.
- Your animal is on antibiotics and/or anti-fungal medications.