

Temperament Test - Test of Characteristics for Breeding

By Lothar Quoll SV Chief Breed Warden for the SV. This article first appeared in Zeitung October 2014
Translated for the "National" by Brian H. Wootton

At the SV AGM in May 2014 (Point 7.1.) it was unanimously decided to offer a temperament test—initially on a voluntary basis and without any pass/fail criteria. In the future the temperament test will become an integral part of a Z.Pr—a suitability for breeding test (a working element still has to be finalised). Consequently, all dogs which are later to be used for breeding, even if just once, should complete the temperament test beforehand at the age of 9-12 months. Through this, in future there will be two routes into breeding; 1) through the temperament test, including a working element suitable to the dog's age. 2) an alternative route through the temperament test and IPO-1.

Meanwhile a practicable concept for temperament assessment has been achieved by a team of breed and working dog judges, designated by the writer and the SV Chief Working Warden. The core team comprises: Lothar Quoll, Heinz Gerdes, Marcus Ossman, Jens-Peter Flügge, Joachim Steigler, Uwe Walters, Erich Bösl, Egon Gutknecht, Helmut König, Friedrich Gerstenberg and Hartmut Setecki.

In the past biting incidents involving dogs of all breeds have occurred again and again. Today public opinion exerts significantly forceful pressure on the dog-breeder, dog-owner and on breed clubs than it did just a few years ago: a breed ban with reference to dangerous dogs, together with discussions about unprincipled and/or irresponsible dog-breeders and other issues such as animal welfare generally and current legislation.

The reasons for these discussions often lie in the deeply embedded anxiety of our fellow citizens. The ever-decreasing living space today leads to increasing confrontation between human and dog. As a breeding association of one of the working breeds we must very seriously consider and respond to the demands of public opinion. Indeed, today there are discussions in some parts of state parliaments about the circumstances around private dog-owners, involving regulatory laws in their individual states that could involve a general ban on the Schutzhund sport in private circles.

As an association we are obliged to point the way with suitable measures. We must offer solutions with sensible measures and create co-operation. In this, it is important that our dogs can cope with the growing demands of the environment. Today we need dogs with a sound temperament and very balanced nerves without excessive aggression or anxiety, which can adequately meet the constant changing and growing demands of their social environment.

"TODAY'S SITUATION REQUIRES DOGS WITH A FIRM TEMPERAMENT AND A STABLE NERVOUS SYSTEM WITHOUT EXCESSIVE AGGRESSION."

What is a temperament test?

With a temperament test we can understand a dog's behaviour and flexibility during confrontation with differing stimuli, which release or provoke a particular behaviour. Through the behaviour during the whole test one can determine the temperament of the dog with the aim of evaluating and examining as objectively as possible the dog's suitability to live alongside people in today's environment.

Temperament (also called character or personality) is the totality of relatively stable behavioural patterns (www.wikipedia.de). For

example there are individuals (humans and animals) that are overall more anxious, extro- or introverted (seeking pleasurable contact or more cautious) than others. The temperament test must involve a standardised test with set situations that, as far as possible, guarantee comparability objectivity and reproducibility. Consequently, the sequence of the different test situations must be set down and followed exactly. This is because individual elements impose differing pressures upon the dog and, as a result, can influence subsequent behaviour during the progress of the test.

"THE TESTED DOG MUST NOT BE PRESENTED UNDER FORMAL OBEDIENCE CONTROL."

Commands are to be limited to the minimum necessary. On this basis, the working tests (BH, IPO etc) where, primarily, learned and conditional behaviour is tested, are no substitute for a temperament test.

A generally valid minimum age for the dogs submitted should be after they have first reached sexual maturity (preferably between 9-12 months). Each dog will have a matrix in place with adjectives and rating figures (a protocol of procedure.) Initially the data will be stored in a data-bank. The Temperament Test will be entered on the pedigree. With the data gathered we can later make statements about the heritability of particular characterisation—that is, our data will achieve a completely new quality in planning litters in future.

The breeder can be involved, too, because he can motivate his puppy buyers to participate in a temperament test as well. In future the SV, as a breeding association, will actively encourage participation in temperament testing, irrespective of any later use of a dog for breeding. The more dogs of a breed that are tested and statistically recorded, the more conclusive will be the analysis and tendencies of certain emergent behaviour patterns within a breed or blood-line.

The results of progeny assessment will enable good quality, reliable convictions to be made about temperament and, above all, assist breeders in their breeding activity and interested buyers when purchasing puppy.

The contents of the temperament test deals with the assessment of the following stimuli-thresholds:

1. Test of imperturbability (self-control)
2. Social behaviour
3. Confidence in action/agility
4. Play and Prey drive
5. Basic character type
6. Sensitivity to sound/noise

The named thresholds are already a part of the test-concept worked out.

The temperament test must offer enthusiastic motivation for the dog owner and breeder. The observation through the eyes of qualified experts of the relationship between dog/owner can provide the interested owner, who is looking to improve it, with new approaches in dealings with his dog. Communication between test-judges and experienced experts, and the dog-owner should be encouraged.

PART 2 OF THIS ARTICLE WILL APPEAR NEXT MONTH

TEMPERAMENT TEST---TEST OF CHARACTERISTICS FOR BREEDING

By Lothar Quoll SV Chief Breed Warden for the SV. Published with kind permission of the SV. Translated for the "National" by Brian H. Wootton.
Part 2: SV Temperament Test Procedure.

During the whole course of the test the handler may not carry any motivating article.

1. IMPERTURBABILITY

	ID Check	Dentition Check	Measuring on Platform
Normal Dog	Good-natured, relaxed, balanced, neutral, confident, easily handled	Good-natured, relaxed, balanced, neutral, confident, easily handled	Good-natured, relaxed, balanced, neutral, confident, easily handled
Negative Grade -1	Slightly influenced, draws back and somewhat nervous, occasionally threatening, just handleable.	Slightly influenced, draws back and somewhat nervous, occasionally threatening, just handleable.	Slightly influenced, draws back and somewhat nervous, occasionally threatening, just handleable.
Negative Grade -2	Significantly upset, anxious, shy, not handleable.	Significantly upset, anxious, shy, not handleable.	Significantly upset, anxious, shy, not handleable.

IDENTITY CHECK: Dog is on the lead. Dog stands freely on a loosely held lead. No handler-influence (no touching)

DENTITION CHECK & CHECK OF ENTIRETY FOR MALES: Dog is on the lead. Check of the bite by the officiating judge

MEASURING ON PLATFORM: Dog moves on to the board on a loose lead. When the dog is standing on the board the handler can hold the dog for measuring. Minimal influence by the handler

2. SOCIABILITY

	Relationship/ communication between dog and handler	Behaviour in a group of people	Encounter with a strange dog
Positive Grade +2	Strong, close bond, happy, mentally alert, very balanced and confident		
Positive Grade +1	Very good bond, alert, happy with good temperament	Good-natured, happy, makes confident contact.	
Normal Dog	Alert, normal bond, calm, balanced	Good-natured, unperturbed and confident.	Good-natured, transparent, seeks contact, easily controllable (Command)
Negative Grade -1	Shows little bonding, slightly nervous, unsettled, little alertness.	Good-natured, slightly concerned and not confident, avoids contact	Good-natured, slightly affected, tense in contact
Negative Grade -1	No Bond, anxious, repressed and lacking confidence	Lacks confidence, anxious, threatening, shows marked avoidance behaviour	Lacks confidence, anxious, threatening, avoids contact

RELATIONSHIP DOG/HANDLER: Dog brought on lead. On direction of judge the dog is taken off lead. The handler distances himself by approximately 5 meters. The handler calls the dog to him (the dog can also follow free at the same time) then puts dog on lead. The dog is held on a loose lead by a strange person. The handler distances himself behind a group of people (minimum of four, maximum of eight). The handler calls the dog (the dog moves through the group or round the outside). Dog and handler move to the group

GROUP OF PEOPLE: The handler moves through the group with dog off-lead. On direction the dog is put on lead

INDIVIDUAL PERSON (GRADING SAME AS IN GROUP OF PEOPLE): On direction the handler moves to an individual. Greets the person

ENCOUNTER WITH STRANGE DOG (OLDER, GOOD-NATURED AND EXPERIENCED) The dogs move towards each other and meet at a distance of approximately 4 metres. Commands are allowed.

3. PLAY AND PREY DRIVE

	Play Handler/Dog	Play Stranger/dog	Desire to Find (Time factor)	Play Drive Under Pressure
Positive Grade +2	Immediate, intensive, plays without compromise, dynamic, very energetic and sustained. Brings prey object to handler, surrenders prey, animates handler to carry on playing	Immediate, intensive, plays without compromise, dynamic, very energetic and sustained. Brings prey object to handler, surrenders prey, animates handler to carry on playing	Extremely persistent, energetic, purposeful	
Positive Grade +1	Plays convincingly, forceful, energetic and very sustained. Comes back to the area with prey-object but only surrenders unwillingly	Plays convincingly, forceful, energetic and very sustained. Comes back to the area with prey-object but only surrenders unwillingly	Pronounced, enduring, fairly purposeful	Convincing, active, self-confident, unperturbed, eats or plays
Normal Dog	Plays, sufficiently sustained, calm intensity, secures the play object but returns to handler only with considerable assistance	Plays, sufficiently sustained, calm intensity, secures the play object but returns to steward only with considerable assistance	Interested, active for a short time, needs a little support	Only briefly perturbed, quickly stabilised, eats or plays
Negative Grade -1	Hardly plays, little interest, not sustained, secures prey drive, does not return to handler	Hardly plays, little interest, not sustained, secures prey drive, does not return to steward/handler	Weakly evident, activity lessens quickly	Not confident, restrained, does not eat or play
Negative Grade -2	Does not play, no interest, lethargic, prey object is uninteresting	Does not play, no interest, lethargic, prey object is uninteresting	Shows no interest, cannot be motivated	

The handler receives from the Judge's assistant a previously provided motivating article e.g. a bite-roll with straps of minimum 30 cm, maximum 50 cm.

PLAY HANDLER/DOG: The handler plays with his dog off-lead.

PLAY STRANGER/DOG: The handler throws the plaything to a person (Judge's assistant) who is a stranger to the dog about 5 metres away. The handler releases his dog. The dog goes to the strange person and demands its plaything. The dog gains the plaything. The handler puts the dog on the lead and takes up the motivating article.

DESIRE TO FIND: The handler plays briefly with the dog and then, in sight of the dog, puts the plaything in a stable closed container. The dog is taken off the lead. Description of the behaviour (intensity and time) at the box. The judge ends the test and the handler takes up the plaything.

'WOBBLE' TABLE—EXPRESSION OF DRIVES UNDER PRESSURE: The 'wobble' table has the following construction: Standard-size Euro-palette with planks/boards on the top-side and a wooden pole (approximate diameter 5 cm) underneath. The dog is led onto the 'table' on a loose lead (Commands are allowed). After the instability is experienced (the dog is still standing on the board) the dog is offered alternatively the plaything or food.

4. CONFIDENCE IN MOVEMENT

	'WOBBLE' TABLE MOTOR FUNCTION	SMOOTH SURFACE (SILK-SCREEN PRINTING BOARD 120x 80 cms WITH BROOM STICKS—MOVEABLE)	TWO TABLES WITH GAP
Positive Grade +1	Convincing, active, self-confident, unperturbed, confident motor-function	Convincing, active, self-confident, unperturbed, confident motor-function	Convincing, active, self-confident, unperturbed, confident motor-function
Normal Dog	Only briefly affected, quickly gains stability	Confident, only briefly affected, quickly shows confident motor-function again	Confident, only briefly affected, quickly shows confident motor-function again
Negative Grade -1	Uncertain, restrained, clearly restricted motor-function	Uncertain, restrained, clearly restricted motor-function	Uncertain, restrained, clearly restricted motor-function
Negative Grade -2	Refusal	Refusal	Refusal

TABLES: Tables (e.g. three beer-tables) stable, the top surface must be so constituted that the dog can come to a halt. A gap is determined between the second and third table (approx. 5-15 cms). The dog is on a loose lead (commands are allowed) and is led to the table. Jumping onto it is possible, lifting up is usual. Brief pause, then move in direction of the gap. Jump or lift down.

5. BASIC TEMPERAMENT

	BEHAVIOUR OF DOG LEFT ALONE (5 MINUTES)
Positive Grade +2	Calm, confident contact, alert, transparent, unperturbed
Positive Grade +1	Good-natured, calm, composed, waits expectantly
Normal Dog	Slightly unsettled, very alert, conciliatory, stabilises in time
Negative Grade -1	Very unsettled, nervous, holds back, submissive
Negative Grade -2	No confidence, anxious, aggressive, panicky

The dog is tied up in a suitable place by the handler, no commands given to stay, and the handler moves to a distance away out of sight of the dog. After five minutes approximately the Assessor approaches near to the dog with normal deportment and movement. Eventually the Assessor talks to the dog. (The assessment should proceed in a place unfamiliar to the dog, on no account on the training ground).

6. NOISE SENSITIVITY

	INDIFFERENCE TO GUN-SHOT	SOURCE OF NOISE/ENGINE NOISE	SOURCE OF NOISE/CHAIN
Positive Grade +2		Reacts calmly, is alert, seeks out source independently, is unaffected	Reacts calmly, is alert, seeks out source independently, is unaffected
Positive Grade +1		Briefly reactive, quickly stabilises, seeks out source, succeeds with assistance, is unaffected	Briefly reactive, quickly stabilises, seeks out source, succeeds with assistance, is unaffected
Normal Dog	Neutral, unaffected	Marked reaction, stabilises again, seeks out source with significant help, remains slightly affected	Marked reaction, stabilises again, seeks out source with significant help, remains slightly affected
Negative Grade -1	Slightly affected, unsettled (shot-sensitive)	Sensitive reaction, unsettled, composes itself only with difficulty and help, remains cautious	Sensitive reaction, unsettled, composes itself only with difficulty and help, remains cautious
Negative Grade -2	Gun-shy, anxious, panics.	Marked over-reaction, anxious, panics, avoidance behaviour, very uncertain, disturbed	Anxious, panics, avoidance behaviour, very uncertain, disturbed

INDIFFERENCE TO GUN-SHOT: Dog is held on a loose lead. The Assessor stands approx. 15 paces in front of dog and fires two shots at an interval of approx. 3 seconds (blanks—6mm).

NOISE SOURCE/ENGINE: For this assessment the following sources of noise can be used: Lawn mower, seated mower, generator, motor vehicle (Auto, moped etc). The dog stands on a loose lead, in the immediate vicinity of the source of noise, which undergoes a variation, through stepping on the accelerator and also using the horn (switching on or off).

NOISE SOURCE/CHAIN: The handler runs in the designated direction with his dog on a loose lead. On the direction of the Assessor the noise-source is triggered.

The temperament test is conceived as a separate, independent event, which, for example can be connected to the date of the Körung.

THESE REGULATIONS MUST BE READ WITH THE FIRST PART OF THIS ARTICLE IN MIND (SEE FEBRUARY ISSUE). PARTICULARLY 'THE TESTED DOGS MUST NOT BE HANDLED IN OBEDIENCE MODE'. COMMANDS MUST BE LIMITED TO THE MOST NECESSARY ONLY.

[The test is being piloted during 2015 in five areas in Germany, when it is then expected to be implemented generally. It will be interesting to see if the supporters of the WUSV clubs will be prepared to encourage the test. *BHW*]