

Farm Dog Certified (FDC) Test



Complete Test Guide

October 2017



Overview

The Farm Dog Certified test provides for a series of twelve exercises that represent situations a farm dog would encounter in a typical farm environment. The basic test requirements are designed to emphasize a dog's ability of self-control, confidence and trust necessary to succeed in any canine/human partnership. These traits and foundational training are vital to a working farm dog.

The FDC program provides an opportunity for all dogs to apply their basic training in a novel environment, demonstrating their natural capability and trainability to work in partnership with their human companions. The Farm Dog Certified test is open to all dogs.

Objective

The Farm Dog Certified test is designed to assess the overall conduct of a dog within a typical farm environment. The dog must demonstrate self-control when exposed to livestock and other unique sights, sounds and scents. The dog should exhibit confidence and a willingness to comply with instruction when confronted with a variety of situations.

The Farm Dog Certification is not intended to confer herding capability, but rather a foundation of self-control and biddability beneficial to all working dogs.

General Test Requirements

- Non-competitive pass/fail evaluation of dog's ability to exhibit self-control in a rural farm setting.
- Open to all dogs at least 9 months of age that are individually registered with the AKC, recorded in the FSS program, dogs with PAL numbers, or dogs enrolled in the AKC Canine Partners Program. Females in season may not enter.
- Safety is paramount. Farm site must be well maintained, with fences, gates and equipment in good working order. All livestock must be in good condition, provided with fresh water, clean housing, and confined to dog proof enclosures during the test evaluation.
- The Judge must have at least one assistant to aid in administering the test.
- Dogs must be on a leash at all times while on farm site unless confined in a crate, kennel or vehicle. The leash shall be four to six feet in length.
- Dogs must wear a secure, well fitting, flat collar during the test evaluation.
- Handlers can use verbal cues, hand signals and praise provided it is not excessive in the opinion of the Judge.
- Dogs may attempt each test element no more than two times.
- Dog must pass all elements of the test and overall assessment during the same test to qualify.
- Dog must qualify under two different Judges in order to qualify to be awarded the FDC suffix title.
- The Judge may discontinue testing if he/she determines the dog is too fearful or under duress to perform the required elements.
- The Judge may request the removal of any dog from the immediate test area at any time, if he/she determines the presence of the dog presents a risk to livestock, other dogs, or persons on the farm.

Test Elements

Test elements may be arranged in any order with the exception of the first and last element (#1 & #12)

1) GREET JUDGE – INITIAL DOG APPRAISAL

- The handler approaches the Judge with the dog at side on a loose lead.
- The dog may stand, sit or down at the handler's side on a loose lead while the Judge performs introduction.

➤ SKILLS DEMONSTRATED

- Ability of the dog to demonstrate patience and self-control while meeting a friendly stranger.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog jumps on Judge, shows any aggressiveness, excessive shyness, or is restrained by a tight lead.

2) PERFORM A WALKING PATTERN AROUND FARM ENVIRONMENT / PASSIVE STRANGER

- The handler walks the dog on a loose lead through a prescribed pattern (minimum of 200 feet) around a number of objects. As the facility permits – the marked path should guide the handler and the dog safely around farm equipment, through barn aisles, by stacks of feed, etc.
- A passive stranger should be sitting quietly approximately 20 feet away from the path of the dog.
- Livestock and gates should be avoided at this stage. The dog must remain on a loose lead, and willingly follow the handler throughout the pattern.

➤ SKILLS DEMONSTRATED

- Ability of the dog to demonstrate self-control, responsiveness to the handler, and ability to adapt to an unfamiliar environment.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog is repeatedly on a tight lead, barks or refuses to follow the handler, or shows fear or aggression to the passive stranger or unfamiliar objects.

3) JUMP ON HAY/STRAW BALE

- The handler approaches a hay/straw bale or a safe pile of sacks of grain/feed with the dog on a loose lead and instructs the dog to jump up on the bale of hay. The dog may stand, sit or down until the Judge instructs the handler to allow the dog to jump off of the hay bale.
- The Judge shall determine length of stay (minimum of 10 seconds) until satisfied that the dog is comfortable with the exercise.

➤ SKILLS DEMONSTRATED

- Ability of the dog to exhibit obedience to the handler, traverse varying terrain on farms, and athletic ability to be positioned as needed.

- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog fails, after two attempts, to jump on the bale independently, with no assistance from the handler. Or if the dog does not stay on the bale/pile for the minimum of 10 seconds.

4) WALK BY FARM ANIMALS

- The handler walks the dog on a loose lead in view of penned farm animal(s) approximately 30 feet away from the fence line housing the farm animals. The dog is not expected or encouraged to engage with livestock and should pay no undue attention to the animal(s) at this distance.
- Any animal routinely found on a farm is suitable, cow, pig, sheep, horse, chickens, ducks etc. All livestock must be penned or fenced in a manner to ensure safety from any uncontrolled dogs.
- Allows for the Judge to evaluate the dog's initial response to livestock.

➤ SKILLS DEMONSTRATED

- Ability of the dog to demonstrate self-control, responsiveness to the handler, and ability to not disturb livestock.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog is repeatedly on a tight lead, refuses to follow the handler, or shows fear or aggression towards the livestock.

5) WALK OVER OR THROUGH UNUSUAL SURFACES

- The handler walks the dog over or through three different unusual surfaces.
- One surface shall be a piece of plastic that is a minimum of 8 feet long and 4 feet wide, such as a polyethylene tarp or clear plastic in good condition.
- A second surface shall be a wood surface that is a minimum of 8 feet long and 4 feet wide, such as a sheet of plywood or wood flooring that is lying flat on the ground.
- A third option shall represent typical rural terrain and can include such examples as safe metal or wire grating lying flat on the ground, mud, water, or jump over a series of three logs that are a minimum 4" diameter which are placed 3 feet apart. If mud or water is used, the dog, at a minimum, must place all four feet in the mud/water. Surfaces should not present any risk of injury to the dog or handler.

➤ SKILLS DEMONSTRATED

- Demonstrates that the dog is fit to walk on different surfaces and to willingly accompany the handler on a loose lead to any places necessary to perform chores on a farm.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog refuses to calmly walk over a new surface after two attempts, is excessively fearful, requires a tight lead, or demonstrates avoidance.

6) SUPERVISED SEPARATION

- The handler places the dog in a free standing kennel or dog crate, removes the leash and walks out of sight for a minimum of 1 minute.
- The dog may move around within the space allotted but should not continually bark, whine, or pace unnecessarily, or exhibit any behavior greater than mild agitation or nervousness.

➤ **SKILLS DEMONSTRATED**

- Demonstrates that the dog can be confined temporarily as needed, and will maintain training and good manners out of sight of the handler.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog appears frantic or anxious or exhibits excessive barking.

7) PASS THROUGH A GATE

- The handler approaches a designated gate with the dog on a lead. The handler instructs the dog to stay in position while the handler opens the gate (the dog may stand, sit or down). The handler opens the gate away from the dog, passes through and calls the dog through the gateway. The handler then instructs the dog to stay as the gate is closed.
- At no time should the dog impede the handler in opening and closing the gate.
- The gate should function properly, be simple to operate, and present no safety hazard to the dog or the handler.

➤ **SKILLS DEMONSTRATED**

- Ability of the dog to demonstrate self-control and basic obedience to not interfere with necessary task of the handler.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog does not hold a stay after two attempts, will not pass through the gate when instructed, or interferes with the handler operating the gate.

8) HANDLER FEEDS LIVESTOCK

- The handler performs a farm chore of feeding farm animals. At no time will the handler or the dog enter an enclosure or have direct contact with the animals(s). All feeding of livestock shall be over or through a fence or enclosure.
- The handler approaches the animal enclosure with the dog at side on a loose lead. Approximately 30 feet from the enclosure, the handler ties/stakes the dog in a designated area. The dog must be wearing a secure, flat collar. The handler instructs the dog to stay and proceeds to complete the chore of feeding the animals before returning to the dog.

➤ **SKILLS DEMONSTRATED**

- Ability of the dog to be tied and remain calm while the handler performs the task of interacting with livestock. Establishes foundation for the dog to be trusted around livestock.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog is frantic or anxious while tied, barks repeatedly, pulls

excessively on lead or demonstrates aggression toward the livestock.

9) REACTION TO ANOTHER DOG

- The handler is positioned in a designated area with the dog at side on a loose lead. The dog may stand, down or sit. Another dog is walked by twice on lead approximately 10 feet away. The first time the distraction dog is walked by on the side of its handler that is away from the dog being tested. The distraction dog and handler will then reverse direction and pass with the distraction dog on the side toward the dog being tested.
- While acceptable to notice the other dog, the tested dog should be accepting of the other dog and not appear to be unduly distracted.
- The tested dog must remain on a loose lead and show no fear or aggression toward the passing dog.

➤ SKILLS DEMONSTRATED

- Ability of the dog to exhibit self-control and acceptance of other, non-threatening, dogs working on the farm property.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog incessantly barks, pulls on lead or tries to make contact with the other dog, demonstrates fearfulness or aggression toward the other dog.

10) REACTION TO NOISE DISTRACTION

- The handler may stand or quietly walk in a designated area with the dog at side on a loose lead. The assistant creates two background noises typical to a working farm environment.
- Noise distractions can consist of any common farm sound, such as hammering nails, sawing wood, leaf blower, farm machine starting up, lawn mower, chain saw, air compressors, etc.
- The tested dog must remain on a loose lead, and exhibit no excessive fear or sensitivity to the background noise.

➤ SKILLS DEMONSTRATED

- Ability of the dog to demonstrate normal sensitivity to typical noises of everyday life on a farm.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog appears excessively fearful or demonstrates strong avoidance.

11) DOG APPROACHES LIVESTOCK

- The handler, with the dog at side on a loose lead, enters a fenced area that contains livestock within a separate inside enclosure. The handler and the dog approach penned livestock, close enough so that the dog can clearly observe the stock. The dog can move ahead of the handler but cannot lunge or be held on a tight lead.
- The dog must remain responsive and under control while approaching livestock and/or if the dog's presence causes the livestock to move within their enclosure.

- It is acceptable and anticipated that the dog may show interest and liveliness towards the livestock, but at no time should the dog exhibit fearfulness or aggressiveness.
- When instructed by the Judge, the handler will go to the end of the lead and recall the dog to the handler. The dog must comply and willingly return to the handler without tugging within two attempts. The dog must return attention to the handler and willingly exit the fenced area with the handler.
- All enclosure fencing must be in good condition, safe, and of a type that would not permit any passage by a dog, small or large.

➤ **SKILLS DEMONSTRATED**

- Demonstrates that the dog can exhibit self-control when asked to approach, and possibly move livestock, while on lead. Demonstrates the dog's ability to be called away from livestock when instructed by the handler.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog appears excessively fearful or aggressive towards the livestock, is excessively pulling on lead, demonstrates strong avoidance or refuses to obediently leave the livestock or the outer enclosure when instructed.

12) PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

- The handler examines the dog for any plant material, debris or objects that the dog may have collected while working on the farm.
- The handler may place the dog on a hay bale, table, or on the ground, and briefly examine the dog's ears, eyes, mouth, coat and toes to ensure the dog is free of any foreign material such as grass, hay, burrs, etc.
- The dog must willingly accept the examination by the handler.

➤ **SKILLS DEMONSTRATED**

- Ability of the dog to exhibit patience, obedience, and trust in the handler while being touched and examined.
- **The dog shall not pass** if the dog fails to accept any part of the examination, exhibits annoyance, fear, or aggression towards the handler or will not stay in place during the exam.

Overall Assessment

In addition to passing each element of the test, the Judge shall, at the end of the test, determine if the dog consistently exhibited traits that would distract from being a useful working farm dog. This might include incessant barking, chronic distraction, constant tugging on the leash, timidity, lack of interest, or over exuberance. This would address a situation whereas a dog may meet the minimum requirements for each test element but fail in the spirit of performing as a confident working partner on a farm.

At the end of the evaluation form, the Judge is asked to evaluate the dog's overall performance -

Did the dog perform in the manner necessary to make it a useful working farm dog? Yes (pass)
(No, incessant barking, chronic distraction, constant tugging, timidness, lack of interest or over exuberance) Needs
Training

Administration

- Noncompetitive pass/fail evaluation to determine dog's basic training and ability to maintain self-control in a farm environment.
- The Farm Dog Certified test is open to all dogs at least 9 months of age that are individually registered with the AKC, recorded in the FSS program, dogs with PAL numbers or dogs enrolled in the AKC Canine Partners program. Females in season may not enter. A dog may enter only once per event. (An event is defined by an event number).
- All Clubs currently licensed to hold AKC Herding tests/trials will be allowed to hold Farm Dog Certified tests. The FDC test can be held as a class at a Herding event or may be held as a stand-alone test. Clubs may hold only one FDC class per event (as defined by its event number). Clubs or youth organizations not licensed for herding may be approved to hold FDC tests in unique situations. In this case, the [FDC Event Application for Non-Herding Clubs](#) must be submitted to the Performance Events Department.
- Any participating AKC club will have the option to accept FDC "Day of Test" entries. If day of test entries are allowed, it must be stated in the premium.
- All individuals approved to judge AKC Herding Tests/Trials are eligible to judge a FDC test.
- Qualified individuals, who are not AKC Herding Judges, but can demonstrate extensive dog and livestock experience, can apply to be certified as FDC judges using the [Application to Judge FDC](#) form.
- FDC judges can apply to hold FDC tests using the [FDC Event Application for Non-Herding Clubs](#)
- Judging FDC tests will not count against a herding Judge's daily per dog judging limit when in conjunction with an approved AKC Herding Test/Trial but clubs should be cognizant of time requirements.
- Submittal of results: The host organization/club or judge must mail the event secretary report and results to the Performance Events Department and include a recording fee of \$3.50 per entry. [A FDC Test Results](#) form must be completed and returned to AKC.
- If the dog passes the FDC test on two occasions under two different Judges, the owner may apply for the suffix Farm Dog Certified (FDC) title by submitting a [FDC Title Application](#) form and a nominal processing fee. Clubs are encouraged to have this form available at the event and on hand for participants. Once verified, the FDC title will be applied to the dog's record and will appear on the dog's AKC pedigree.

Summary

The Farm Dog Certified test provides for a series of exercises that represent situations a farm dog would encounter in a typical farm environment. The basic test requirements are designed to emphasize a dog's ability of self-control, confidence and trust necessary to succeed in any canine/human partnership. These traits and foundational training are vital to a working farm dog as well as the welfare of livestock.

It is important to underscore the distinction that the FDC test does not infer actual herding capability, as herding should be clearly identified as a separate and more refined instinctive skill set. However, the FDC test demonstrates the fundamental training and temperament necessary for a herding dog to move into the herding program.

The FDC program provides an opportunity for all dogs to apply their basic training in a novel environment, demonstrating their natural capability and trainability to work in partnership with their human companions. In addition, the program will attract a new segment of dog owners to AKC Herding events.

Farm Dog Certified Contact Info:

- Farm Dog Certified Test Event Applications or Results - call 919-816-3908 or performance_events@akc.org
- Farm Dog Title Requests - call 919-816-3816 or performance_events@akc.org
- Farm Dog Judges - call 919-816-3904 or performancejudges@akc.org