# Dog Pre-load Exam

# Before dogs are loaded, a quick, pre-load exam is important to confirm they are suitable for transport. Even after a dog has been medically cleared, a final exam may identify new conditions that have developed. In these cases, reevaluate the dog's fitness for this transport.

## Exam Basics

A pre-load exam should be a quick process; approximately 30 seconds per animal. The handler briefly assesses the dog's behavior, gait, eyes, nose, ears, body, tail, and underside. *Note: Personal protective equipment, such as a gown and gloves, should be worn to minimize cross-contamination.*

## Assessments

**Behavior**

As the dog is brought to the vehicle, it is important to notice if they’re receptive to handling and not fearful or withdrawn. Be sure the dog is not demonstrating extreme fear or aggression towards humans or other animals, such as snarling, biting, or lip curling.

**Gait**

While the dog is walking to the vehicle, they should be moving normally with no obvious limping or injuries to the hips, legs, forelimbs, hind limbs, or paws that are not already described on the transport manifest.   
*Note: Double leashing will help minimize the risk of escape.*

**Eyes**

Once the dog approaches you, look at their eyes to be sure they’re bright, clear, and free of discharge, injuries, or other conditions not described on the transport manifest. *Note: Cloudy eyes may be normal for older animals.*

**Nose**

Look at the nose to be sure there’s no discharge, abnormality, or other conditions not described on the transport manifest. Animals who are coughing or sneezing should not be loaded.

**Ears**

Be sure to examine both ears to make sure there’s no pain, discharge, foul smell, or other condition not already described on the transport manifest.  *Note: Many dogs are sensitive to ear handling.*

**Body**

Gently run your hands down the dog's body front to back to check for wounds, evidence of fleas, ticks, or hair loss.

**Tail**

After checking the dog’s body, lift their tail to confirm the dog’s sex; make sure there’s no evidence of diarrhea.

**Underside**

Have a partner carefully lift the dog’s front half to examine their belly. If a surgical wound is present, it should be clean and free of any discharge. The incision should be closed, and no stitches or staples should be visible.

Once the pre-load exam is complete, load the dog for transport.