



BPH

Behavior and Personality Assessment in Dogs

Swedish Kennel Club, SKK



SKK - A66



Behavior and Personality Assessment in Dogs, BPH

BPH is a behavioral assessment that has been created with the aim to contribute to better knowledge about the mentality and personality of dogs, all dogs. It should be helpful for breed clubs, breeders and dog owners to have a tool which helps to describe the personality of the dog, whether it is a potential breeding animal, pet or working dog. For a person considering to buy a dog, BPH can also give a description of the general mentality of various breeds and of the parents of the puppy litter of interest. Every BPH-described dog contributes with a piece of information that increases our understanding and knowledge about the behavior of that specific breed and of dogs in general.

The BPH takes about 30 minutes. It consists of 7 parts and the aim is to give a summary of how the dog reacts in and handles various situations. This could be about meeting strangers, playing, searching for food and surprises. If desired, the dog's reaction to gun shot can also be described. After finishing the track, the observer will give an oral summary of the dog's reactions to the owner and gives a subjective description of its personality.

The dog must be at least 1 year but there is no upper age limit. It must have known identity and be vaccinated. Unregistered dogs must have a license to compete and the owner or handler must be a member of SKK or an associated breed club. No preparation or training is necessary and there is no minimum requirement for obedience level. If you prefer not to have the dog unleashed, you can have it on a long leash (rope). The dog owner needs no preparation but will be guided by the observer at each step.

What can I learn from BPH as a dog owner?

Based on the reactions of your dog you will get a better picture of the strong points of your dog and in what situations it might need more support and encouragement. BPH can also give you information about behaviors and reactions in your dog that you perceive as challenging or undesirable. BPH does not say everything about your dog, but can contribute a lot.

What can breed clubs and breeders learn from BPH?

BPH is intended to help breeders to better select those animals that will inherit desirable mentality to their offspring. It is also important that the observed reactions are strongly connected to the dog's behavior in every-day life.

BPH should give basic information about the mentality of the breed, which can be complemented by breed-specific tests or evaluations. It is important that clubs and breeders actively support that many dogs are described in BPH, because it will give better opportunities to estimate heritabilities and breeding values for these behaviors.

Who is responsible for BPH?

The Swedish Kennel Club (SKK) is the organization mainly responsible. SKK educates the observers and carry out quality assurance of the observers and the sites of BPH. Breed clubs and regional SKK clubs arrange BPH based on the rules of SKK. SKK is responsible for registering and publishing all BPH results.



The parts of BPH

1. Stranger

An unknown person, the test leader, approaches the owner and the dog. The dog's greeting behavior, tendency to anxiety or avoidance, the need to assert itself or show submissiveness and if the dog rejects the contact attempt by aggression is noted.



2. Playing with object

Both the owner and the test leader plays with the dog. This part has two aims: partly to describe the will to play with an object, partly to describe the attitude of the dog in playing.

3. Food interest

The dog is given the opportunity to take treats, both of its own favorite kind and of a standardized kind, from cans with lids that are either open or secured to various degrees. The aim is to describe how willing the dog is to work to get its treats and the general food interest. The intention is also that this part will pick the dog's general persistence in solving a problem. The dog's tendency to contact the owner is also noted.



4. Surprise

A silhouette of a person is raised suddenly in front of the dog when it is walking with its owner. Aggression and fear is noted but also the ability to overcome this adverse emotional experience and how engaged the dog is in handling the situation.



5. Sudden noise

A metal drum containing a chain, creating a loud noise, is rotated when the dog approaches. The dog can freely approach the drum to investigate. The aim is to describe fear of sudden noise but also its curiosity in an unexpected situation.

6. Approaching stranger

A person in a wide coat, wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses approaches the dog slowly and in intervals. When the person has arrived at a certain distance, he/she turns around, faces away and stands still. The dog is allowed to approach to investigate and initiate contact. This part is attempting to measure the dog's reaction when meeting people that act, from the dog's perspective, in an unusual way.



7. Surface material

The dog and owner walks across a stretch with a new and previously unknown surface material. The intention is to measure the anxiety or uncertainty connected to walking on this new material.



8. Gun shot (optional)

Two gun shots are fired about 50 meters from the dog and owner, one when both are in motion, one when both are standing still. The intention is to describe the dog's reaction to the sudden gun shot.

What behaviors does BPH describe?

There are many behavior traits that are important not only for the dog's own welfare but also for us dog owners. What kind of reactions the various stimuli in the BPH situation elicit in a certain dog depends on that dog's personality and behavioral repertoire. All traits are not possible to describe, for instance because the relevant situation is difficult to mimic in a test or to repeat in an identical way, or owing to practical time constraints. BPH is focusing on the following behavior groups.

1. Sociability

Sociability describes how social the dog is towards unknown people. This includes the tendency to initiate contact, how eagerly and how long it greets, and the degree of submissiveness. Interest in unknown humans is partly breed dependent and partly dependent on the dog's own personality. Breeds selected for working independently may not show the same engagement in contacts with people as breeds where good cooperation with humans has been selected for. The dog's own experiences, good or bad, also play a role.

2. Play interest

Play interest focuses on the dog's interest in playing, both with its own favorite object and with a standardized object for BPH. Both the owner and the test leader are playing with the dog. This part has two aims: partly to describe the will to play with an object, partly to describe the attitude of the dog in playing, which is not necessarily directly



connected to interest in objects *per se*. Play interest and the way to play varies largely between breeds. Not all are interested in tug-of-war whereas others love it.

3. Food interest

Dogs with a healthy interest in food or treats are often easier to motivate in a training situation. Such a dog is often prepared to try to solve a problem several times in order to get the desired treat.

4. Owner contact

Owner contact describes the tendency of the dog to keep or initiate contact with its owner and to engage with the owner, e.g., in play. The dog may also seek support and help from the owner when encountering a problem it cannot solve directly. In the Food interest situation many dogs try to get help from their owners when they cannot open the can themselves.

5. Curiosity

An important part of BPH is to get a good opinion about the curiosity of the dog. This is often a useful characteristic when training a dog, regardless of purpose. Curiosity means that the dog has the will to explore its surroundings and objects, both in known and unknown environments. If the dog has been scared, curiosity helps the dog to approach whatever elicited the fear and can help to overcome that fear.

6. Fear and insecurity

An insecure or anxious dog is living in constant preparation for something unpleasant to occur. The opposite is a self-assured dog that appears to have the situation under control. In-between these two extremes there are several grades of fear and anxiety. Specific fears are common in dogs. They may be related to the surroundings (e.g., fear of walking on certain kinds of surfaces, grids etc.) or towards people or other dogs (social fear).

7. Aggression or threat behavior

Many dogs occasionally show threatening or aggressive behavior. This is a natural part of the dog's behavioral repertoire but should not lead to that the dog appears as scary or problematic, neither by the owner nor by others. It is therefore important that dogs with excessive aggressive behavior are identified and that the observer explains to the owner his/her responsibility to correct or avoid such behavior.



How are the results published?

All results from dogs being described in BPH are presented on SKK's website Avelsdata, which is free to use and open to everyone. There the scoring forms, a summary graph and the observer's subjective summary are given. It may take 1-2 weeks after BPH until the results are published.

Score sheet

During the BPH the observer fills out a score sheet with several entries. The aim is to describe the behavior of the dog, not to rate it as being good or bad. One or several scales are used to describe the behavior in each of the 7 (8) situations. One scale may describe the intensity of the behavior while another describes how long the dog shows a certain behavior. A low value on the scale means that the dog shows the behavior only to a small degree or for a short time, and vice versa.

Moment 1: Främmande person

FAS 1	Sekvens 1 TL går fram och står 5 meter bort	Sekvens 2 TL står säst mot säst	Sekvens 3 TL pratar med/klappar hund
Utforskande	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	
Positiv hälsning (intensitet)	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Positiv hälsning (tid)	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Flykt/avståndökande	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Passiv oro	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Undergivenhet	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Hotfullhet	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Imponerbeteende	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Bitbeteende			
Avbryter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

FAS 2	Sekvens 1 TL går bort 1	Sekvens 2 TL hantlar hunden 1	Sekvens 3 TL går tillbaka 1	Sekvens 4 TL går bort 2	Sekvens 5 TL hantlar hunden 2	Sekvens 6 TL tillbaka 2
Förarbundenhet	0 1 2 3		0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3		0 1 2 3
Positiv hälsning (intensitet)		0 1 2 3			0 1 2 3	
Positiv hälsning (tid)		0 1 2 3			0 1 2 3	
Flykt/avståndökande		0 1 2 3			0 1 2 3	
Passiv oro		0 1 2 3			0 1 2 3	
Undergivenhet		0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Imponerbeteende	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
Bitbeteende	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
Avbryter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

FAS 3	Sekvens 1 TL styrer ringen själv	Sekvens 2 TL lyfter framfötter	Sekvens 3 TL tar på en baklås	Sekvens 4 TL står på lås
Flykt/avståndökande	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Passiv oro	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Undergivenhet	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Imponerbeteende	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Bitbeteende	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
Avbryter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Utforskande
0 Inget utforskande
1 blick mot/dofundersökning mot TL, sträcker sig mot (ev ngt slag mot) TL
2 som 1, men tar några slag mot TL
3 som 1, tar sig aktivt mot TL

POSITIV HÄLSNING (intensitet)
0 ingen hälsning
1 något svarsvitt, ngn rörelse mot och/eller blick mot TL:s ansikte
2 tydligt svarsvitt, nära TL, söker sig mot TL:s ansikte
3 ivrigt svarsvitt, hoppar upp mot TL, vokaliserar, trampar runt

Positiv hälsning (tid)
0 ingen hälsning
1 under kort stund
2 under ungefär halva sekvensen
3 under hela eller nästan hela sekvensen

Flykt/avståndökande
0 inga tecken
1 backning bort från TL (strötar/ajjamar emot vid hälsning)
2 undanmanövrer bort från TL
3 skutt eller mer intensiv undanmanövrer bort från TL

Passiv oro
0 Inga tecken
1 något låg kropp eller svans (ingen vittring)
2 låg kropp och låg svans (ingen vittring), eventuell munstökning och/eller hälsning
3 som 2, men helt frusen och/eller fler tecken på oro

Undergivenhet
0 Inga tecken
1 lågt hållen kropp och svans med något viftande svans
2 som 1, men "slämda öron", slick/vickintention
3 ännu lägre kropp, lågt huvud

Hotfullhet
0 Inga tecken
1 enstaka döva skall/morr
2 flera döva skall/morr, kropp och öron framtåt och uppåt
3 flera döva skall/morr, framtröttnar, kropp och öron tydligt framtåt/uppåt

Imponerbeteende
0 Inga tecken
1 något uppsträckt/höjd svans
2 uppsträckt/höjd svans, stel kropp
3 uppsträckt/höjd svans, stel kropp, stirr mot TL

Bitbeteende
0 Inga tecken
1 bitintention (inkl. visar tänder)
2 bett

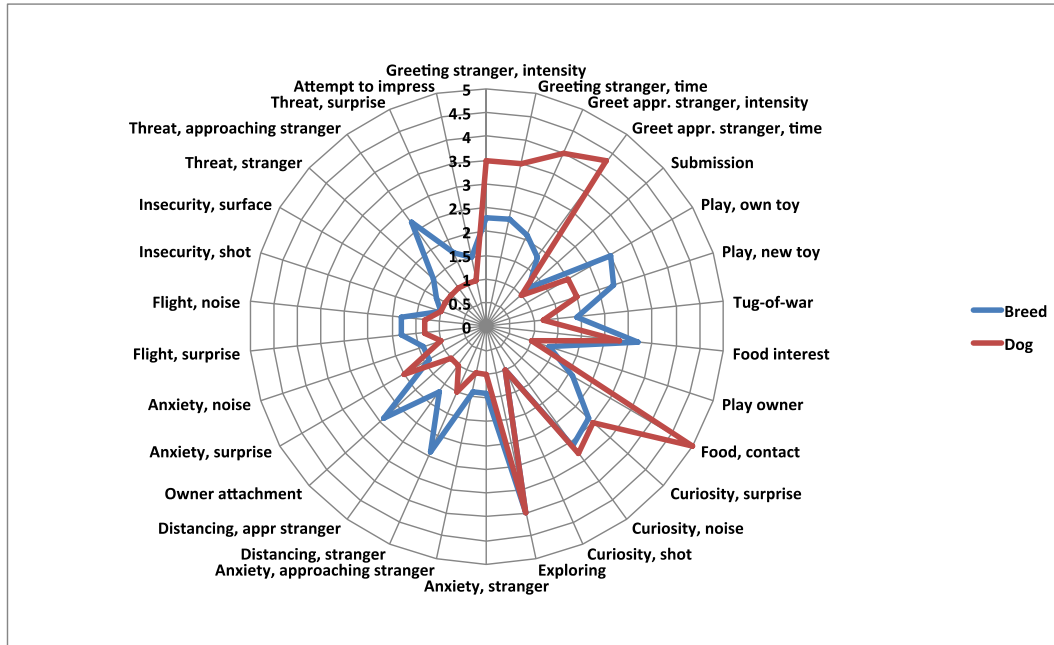
Förarbundenhet
0 Inga tecken
1 blickar att lämna föraren/går framför TL (på tillbakavägen)
2 svär att få med från föraren/övar mot föraren
3 helt stopphisar mot föraren

Beskrivningen avbryts i detta moment. Orsak:
 Aggressivitet Rädsla Föraren bryter



Results for various behavior variables

The results for various behavior variables are summarized both in tabular and graphic form. The same behavior is measured in several situations and the presented results are a summarized result. In the graph the individual dog's behavior is compared with the breed average.



Subjective description of the dog

After the BPH the observer also gives subjective summary of the dog's behavior and personality. The following categories are used:

- **Angry.** The dog easily becomes angry and shows aggressive behavior.
- **Energetic.** The dog is alert and reacts quickly on stimuli. Can be perceived as that the dog is always on edge.
- **Happy to meet unknown people.** Likes to be around unknown people. Positively answers invites of contact from strangers and often initiates contacts on its own.
- **Playful.** Often answers invitations to play and often invites to play on its own.
- **Loud.** Often reacts by barking in various situations. Can also whine while waiting for activities and being loud when greeting.
- **Curious.** Interested in anything that happens and wants to explore in a positive manner.
- **Secure.** The dog is self-assured and can handle situations that are potentially fear-eliciting, in a rational way.

Further evaluation

In those cases where the dog shows a behavior that the observer deems necessary to amend or correct, a more thorough evaluation can be done. This can be either with respect to the welfare of the dog or because the requirements from society cannot accept certain behaviors. This mainly refers to excessive fear reactions or aggressiveness.