

Your dog's physical exam

Just what is the veterinarian looking for when they stare and gently push, pull, and poke your dog during a visit? Here's a breakdown of the major body systems they're checking out and what they're looking for (and hoping not to find).

EARS: signs of ear infection (pain, tenderness, redness, swelling, "yeasty" smell, and discharge); mites

EYES: signs of disease; discharge or tearing; abnormal movement or reaction to light

MOUTH: signs of periodontal disease in teeth and gums; bad breath

LYMPH NODES AND THYROID GLANDS: any irregularities or changes in size

HEART: Weak or abnormal heart sounds; an abnormally fast or slow rate; irregular beats

ABDOMEN: any irregularities in the margins of the liver, spleen, kidneys, and bladder; masses or tumors; thickened intestines

BASE OF TAIL: any abscesses; abnormalities in anal glands; fecal mats; evidence of soft stools; growths; parasites, like tapeworm segments and flea dirt

LUNGS: wheezing, crackling, or other abnormal lung sounds

LEGS: limited range of motion in all limbs; signs of pain or discomfort; grinding sound in joints

COAT, SKIN, AND NAILS: poor overall quality of coat; lumps and bumps; rashes; areas of hair loss or excessive dander; matted or saliva-stained fur; fleas or ticks; callouses; overgrown or ingrown toenails; dehydration

