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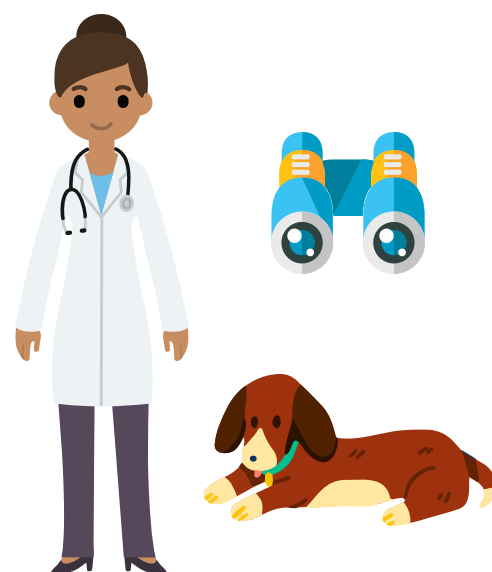
Components of a Canine Physical Exam

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1. Distance Exam

Visiting a vet clinic or having a veterinarian do an exam can be stressful for our pets. Getting a good history from owners is a great way for us to find out how the dog is behaving at home. When we are talking with our clients, this is also our opportunity to observe a pet without yet interacting directly with them. Once we start our close contact with the pet, stress and anxiety may cause them to alter their behaviour and even hide signs of pain or discomfort.

We begin by watching the pet, and observe how they move around the room. We keep our eyes open for anything out of the ordinary for dogs. This is also a good opportunity to watch body language and try and gain an understanding of the pet's personality



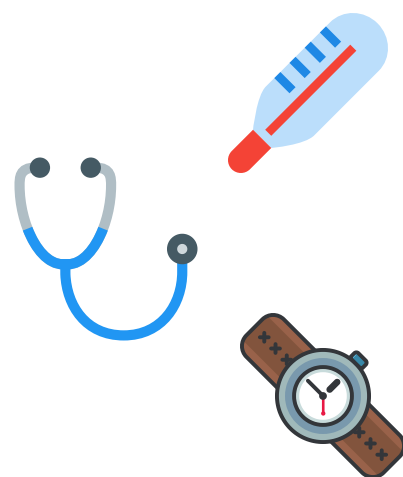
2. Vital Signs

Our first assessments of health begin with the pet's vital signs. This includes Temperature, Heart Rate, and Respiratory Rate. We can assess these by visually observing breaths, using a thermometer, and using our stethoscope to listen more closely to the chest of the dog.

Normal Canine Vital Signs are as follows:

- Temperature 38.3°C - 39.2°C
- Respiratory Rate 15 - 35 breaths per minute
- Heart Rate 60 - 120 bpm (large dogs) & 120 - 160 bpm (small dogs)

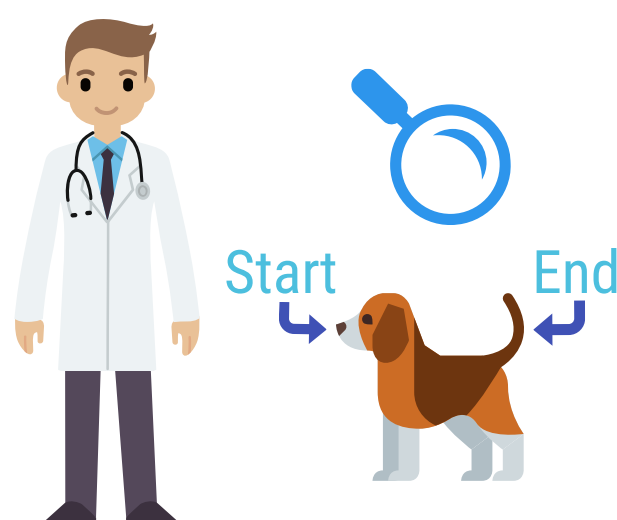
When vital signs fall outside of the normal range it can help indicate infection, stress, pain, and other disease states. When we have this information as veterinarians, it can help point us in the right direction for the pet's health.



3. Close Exam

The next step is to perform a close examination of the dog. We look at the dog from nose to tip of tail and assess each area along the way. This part of the exam can take the longest because we will try to be as thorough as possible.

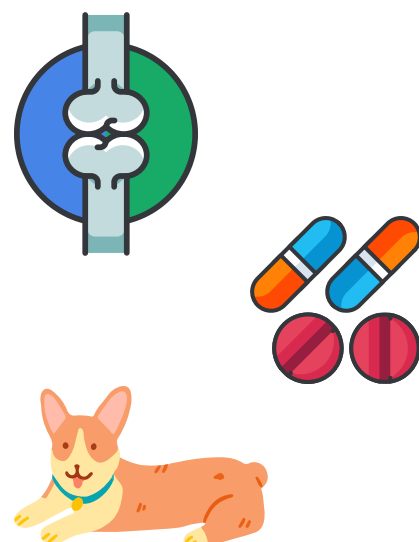
We look at mucous membranes, teeth, eyes, ears, skin and fur quality. We can feel the dog's abdomen and look for any abnormal masses or pain responses. We can look at reflexes and responses to touch. This part of our exam is important for getting more specific information about various body systems of the dog. If we find any areas of concern, we can then recommend further tests.



4. Range of Motion

It is important to look at the limbs and joints when doing our physical exam. We can take the limbs through a series of movements to assess flexibility and range of motion. We can feel for stiffness, areas of swelling, fluid build up, and pain.

Many older dogs will develop degenerative joint disease, so it is important to assess joints with every physical exam. If there is pain and disease present, we can recommend other tests to look at the severity of disease. We can also recommend pain medications and joint supplements to help keep dogs comfortable if they do develop joint disease and pain. This part of the exam may look a bit silly, but it gives valuable information about the dog's ability to move and how comfortable they are.



5. Address Specific Problems

Once we have our physical exam complete, we will gather the information and begin to build a plan. This is when we will collaborate with the owner and discuss our findings.

If there are areas of our exam that were outside of normal expectations, we will try and figure out the cause of the change. We can recommend further tests, such as x-rays and blood work, to further assess the pet. We can also propose some solutions to any issues that arose during the exam.

Owners can ask veterinarians to demonstrate portions of this process that they can do at home. This can allow for owners to keep an eye on their pet's health, and know when they may need to call a vet for advice.

