



# **Australian Canine Eye Scheme (ACES)**

## **RULES AND PROCEDURES**

**January 2008  
Revised  
November 2017**

***A national system of examination, certification and data reporting of abnormal eye conditions (both inherited and non- inherited) in all dog breeds, carried out Australia-wide by registered veterinary eye specialists to standards set by the Ophthalmology Chapter of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists.***

***The Australian Canine Eye Scheme is endorsed by the Australian Veterinary Association and administered by the Australian National Kennel Council.***

**CONTENTS**

- I INTRODUCTION AND MISSION STATEMENT .....3**
  
- II DETAILED RESPONSIBILITIES .....4**
  - (A) THE AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION .....4
  - (B) THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL .....4
  - (C) THE ACES EXAMINING PANEL .....5
  - (D) THE ACES CHIEF PANELLIST.....5
  - (E) THE EYE SCHEME STANDING COMMITTEE (ESSC) .....6
  - (F) FEES CHARGED FOR ACES TESTING.....6
  
- III MECHANISMS FOR RECORDING INDIVIDUAL BREED RESULTS .....6**
  
- IV APPEALS PROCEDURE.....7**
  
- V REPORTING OF BREED-SPECIFIC EYE DISEASE DATA .....7**
  
- VI PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY PROVISIONS.....7**

## I Introduction and Mission Statement

The **AVA-ANKC Australian Canine Eye Scheme** (hereinafter referred to as 'ACES') is a service provided throughout Australia by registered veterinary eye specialists who are also members of the Australian Veterinary Association. The aim of the scheme is to provide a means by which purebred dogs in any registered breed may be assessed for defects that affect the normal function of the eye or that may threaten vision. Many of these defects are known to be inherited, others are suspected to be so, or at least to demonstrate evidence of breed predisposition.

The **purpose** of a national eye certification system is twofold. Firstly, the results from annual certification provide an invaluable guide for breeders and breed clubs seeking to reduce the incidence of inherited eye defects. Secondly, it permits the recording of abnormalities of the canine eye in a standardised manner, allowing the meaningful comparison of lesions and incidence figures by breed with data from overseas countries where eye conditions are similarly monitored.

The **Australian Veterinary Association** endorses the scheme and oversees the governance aspects of Panellist functions. The AVA endorses appointments to the ACES Examining Panel, Eye Scheme Standing Committee and the position of ACES Chief Panellist, on the recommendation of the ANZCVS Ophthalmology Chapter committee.

The **Australian National Kennel Council** recognises ACES as the only eye certification system authorised to lodge individual results with the ANKC's inherited diseases database, from which breed-specific data may be shared with similar eye certification schemes overseas. The ANKC requires an assurance that eye testing standards will be applied uniformly and that ACES Panellists can provide a regular assessment service at central locations in each State and Territory on a continuing basis.

ACES certificates will be issued by **registered veterinary eye specialists** who have agreed to participate in an AVA-endorsed national certification scheme.

The examining panellists will elect from among their number annually a three-member Eye Scheme Standing Committee (ESSC) for a three-year term, with positions up for re-election at the end of that period. The purpose of the ESSC is to monitor ACES and its ongoing efficacy and to carry out regular reviews of the incidence of reported eye defects, with recommendations for additions, deletions or changes to the current 'affected/unaffected' criteria and breed lists for hereditary eye diseases. The composition of the ESSC is subject to confirmation by the AVA Board, together with a separate nomination for the position of ACES Chief Panellist.

Examining panellists will also elect from their number a Chief Panellist, also for a three-year term with the position up for re-election at the end of that period. He or she will be responsible for keeping AVA and ANKC informed on significant issues, reporting annual incidence figures breed by breed, communicating with the Canine Control Councils in each State and the ANKC's National Breed Councils on any changes in incidence and status of hereditary eye diseases.

The AVA-ANKC Australian Canine Eye Scheme has set itself the following Mission Statement:

***ACES provides a coordinated assessment and reporting system in purebred dogs of registered breeds for defects that affect normal eye function or may threaten vision. Available on a voluntary basis Australia wide, regular eye certification offers a useful surveillance mechanism for breeders and breed clubs seeking to reduce the incidence of inherited eye defects.***

## **II Detailed Responsibilities**

### **(a) The Australian Veterinary Association**

The AVA will oversee the governance of ACES Panellist functions. AVA will confirm appointments to the ACES Examining Panel, Eye Scheme Standing Committee and the position of ACES Chief Panellist.

Eye testing carried out under the ACES national framework will be in line with the recommendations of the International Society of Veterinary Ophthalmology that have been adopted by the ANZCVS Ophthalmology Chapter. No veterinarian will be authorised to issue an ACES certificate unless he or she is a current appointee to the ACES Examining Panel. Appointed ACES Panellists may issue eye certificates only on serially numbered on-line examination forms. No eye test result issued by a veterinarian who is not a current appointee to the ACES Examining Panel may be represented as being an 'ACES eye exam' or in any way equivalent to an AVA-ANKC Australian Canine Eye Scheme certificate.

AVA will require an ACES Chief Panellist's annual report to be prepared (together with a summarised breakdown of reported eye conditions) and may publish that report on the AVA website. A copy of the ACES Chief Panellist's annual report will be provided to the Australian National Kennel Council and all State Canine Control Councils.

### **(b) The Australian National Kennel Council**

The **Australian National Kennel Council** represents all eight affiliated State and Territory Canine Control Councils and addresses matters of national significance to the purebred canine industry.

ANKC will provide the necessary administrative services, including:

- an on-line data base of ANKC registered dogs for potential eye screening
- an on-line ACES certificate system to generate individual certificates for ACES eye screens
- limiting access to on-line certificate generation to ACES panellists
- a user pays charging system to ACES panellists for certificates generated
- storing and facilitating access to completed ACES certificates
- directing public, breeder and breed club enquiries about ACES

ANKC's administration officer will:

- liaise with the ACES Chief Panellist whenever necessary, to ensure that any appeal against the results of an issued certificate is dealt with according to set procedures.

The ANKC endorses ACES as the only eye certification system authorised to lodge individual results with the ANKC's inherited diseases database. Results from individual dogs will be made available to the ANKC's inherited diseases database, all such records remaining current for one year or until such time as annual re-assessment in that breed is no longer considered necessary. Access to these data will be determined in the context of each breed's decision on 'Open Register' or 'Closed Register' listing. Breed-specific data will be produced in a form able to be shared with similar eye schemes overseas.

ANKC's endorsement of ACES is conditional on an annual review being carried out, as a means of ensuring that key features of the scheme (e.g. permanent identification, set examination procedures and access to breed-specific data) are maintained.

ANKC-affiliated National Breed Councils have an opportunity for input into the assessment standards and hereditary eye disease status pertaining to their breed. On advice from the ESSC, the Chief Panellist reports annually on all the known hereditary eye conditions in each breed and confirms the 'affected/unaffected' standard currently in force. An NBC may make a case to the ESSC to either add, remove or re-schedule a particular defect, but the final decision will remain with the ESSC.

In any review of the assessment standard for an eye condition initiated by a National Breed Council, copied to ANKC and forwarded to the ESSC, the decision of the ESSC is final and under normal circumstances would not become eligible for further reconsideration by the ESSC for at least three years.

If at any time the ANKC, its national Canine Health Committee or any of the State Canine Control Councils believes that the number of Panellists has become insufficient to service the needs of ACES, a request may be made to the AVA Board to try to remedy the situation.

### **(c) The ACES Examining Panel**

Registered veterinary eye specialists in each Australian State or Territory, who are members of the AVA are eligible to join the ACES Examining Panel.

Registered veterinary eye specialists are veterinarians who are currently registered, who have undertaken at least two years of supervised post-graduate training in a formal teaching program recognised by the Australian Veterinary Boards Council through its standing committee the Advisory Committee on the Registration of Veterinary Specialists (ACRVS) and undergone registration as a **specialist in Ophthalmology** by the respective State Veterinary Board. As part of that formal training, each examination candidate will have demonstrated a high level of competence in the specialised examination and diagnosis of canine eye diseases. Only veterinarians registered as specialists in Australia may join the ACES Examining Panel.

ACES Panellists will provide appropriate facilities within their own practices and when agreeing to conduct eye examinations for a local breed club or field trial event at an outside venue, will insist on the AVA-prescribed minimum requirement of a **darkened room with a suitable examination table, adequate bench space for completing certificates and power outlets for diagnostic equipment.**

All members of the ACES Examining Panel will be kept informed by the ESSC of any changes in the status of breeds for hereditary eye diseases. Existing panellists may exclude themselves from the ACES Examining Panel if they feel they are performing insufficient numbers of ACES examinations to ensure consistency of reporting.

### **(d) The ACES Chief Panellist**

AVA will endorse a member of the ACES Examining Panel voted by fellow panellists to the position of ACES Chief Panellist, to serve for a prescribed term of 3 years. The ACES Chief Panellist will oversee the workings of the ACES Examining Panel and the issuing of ACES Certificates, and will facilitate and communicate any recommended changes by the ESSC to the status of specific breeds for specific hereditary eye diseases.

The ACES Chief Panellist will provide the main interface between the eye scheme and dog owners or breed clubs as users of the service.

The ACES Chief Panellist will ensure that examining panellists are kept fully informed on the operation of the scheme and the certifiable conditions in each breed, based on the ESSC's standing 'unaffected / affected' criteria reviewed each year.

The Chief Panellist will assist AVA administrative staff to ensure orderly handling of the Appeals procedure, as a means to review and adjudicate on any application to appeal an ACES Panellist's issued findings.

The Chief Panellist will report annually on the continuing operation of the scheme to the AVA Board and a copy will be forwarded to the Australian National Kennel Council and all State Canine Control Councils.

The Chief Panellist, in consultation with the ESSC and the ANKC, will prepare an annual budget for the operation of the scheme, including ANKC administration, Chief Panellist activities and ESSC meetings. The budget will provide the basis for annually setting the fee to be charged by ANKC for each on-line form used by examining panellists.

## **(e) The Eye Scheme Standing Committee (ESSC)**

The principal task of the ESSC will be to carry out regular reviews of the apparent incidence of reported hereditary eye diseases in Australia under ACES and overseas under similar schemes, plus the results of any relevant new scientific studies. The ESSC will report to the ACES Chief Panellist on the certifiable hereditary eye diseases to be listed for each registered breed, providing the Chief Panellist with recommendations to reconfirm, add to or revise Schedule 1 (hereditary eye conditions for breeds listed) or Schedule 2 (eye conditions under investigation for breeds listed) by the review date of 1 January each year.

Any changes to the Schedules must be reported by the ACES Chief Panellist to ANKC and each State Canine Control Council, for publication before the review date.

The ESSC will confer by telephone whenever necessary to review changing incidence patterns for recognised eye conditions and will meet in person once yearly, before the end of September and preferably linked to any annual ANZCVS Ophthalmology Chapter and ACES Examining Panel meetings.

## **(f) Fees charged for ACES Testing**

No standard national fee scale can be applied to ACES. Panellists are responsible for setting their own fees for ACES testing and should ensure that owners understand the fee structure. The only part of the fee that is uniform is that charged by ANKC for each on-line certificates used by ACES Panellists.

## **III MECHANISMS FOR RECORDING INDIVIDUAL BREED RESULTS**

The ACES Eye Examination Certificate will record the examining panellist's findings from a detailed assessment of both eyes, for any ANKC registered dog or bitch for which identification details have been confirmed by microchip reader or a clearly legible tattoo number.

The following documents must be sighted by the examining panellist at the time of the examination:

- i) The **original registration certificate** issued by a State Canine Control or the registering authority in the country of origin, endorsed with a record of permanent identification (microchip or tattoo).
- ii) Any **change of ownership documentation** or original export certificate from the country of origin.
- iii) The **most recent eye certificate** issued in Australia or overseas.
- iv) A formal transcript of any **genetic test results for a relevant eye condition** issued by a recognised testing laboratory, that the owner wishes to see included in the ANKC Inherited Diseases database.

If any of these documents are held but not presented, then the examination may proceed but the results will not be made available (even verbally) and the certificate will not be issued until the missing documents have been sighted by the ACES Panellist. Unless individual registration certificates are to hand, ACES Panellists carrying out a Litter Assessment will need to see a copy of the **Application to Register the Litter**, including registration details for the sire and dam and a signed service certificate.

ACES Panellists will be supplied with the current **Schedule 1 and 2 lists** and a **Litter Screening Checklist** along with an updated copy of the **ACES Diagnostic Criteria Supplement**.

## **IV APPEALS PROCEDURE**

The **ACES Guide for Owners** provides a comprehensive outline of the Appeals Procedure should an owner/breeder wish to dispute an ACES Certificate finding.

## V REPORTING OF BREED-SPECIFIC EYE DISEASE DATA

The Australian National Kennel Council is committed to the on-going monitoring of canine health. The ANKC's national registration database will have the ability to append the inherited disease status of a particular animal in any breed, to that dog's ANKC registration record. Any such notation must carry with it a **high standard of test verification**, which is why surveillance schemes such as the Australian Canine Eye Scheme need to operate in a highly specified manner, subject to procedural and technical audits of the scheme's ability to deliver results that are in accord with ANKC's own goals.

The ANKC has allowed breed clubs and NBC's to nominate either **Open** or **Closed Register** status, depending on how they want to see the results from all eye exams in their breed made available.

## VI PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY PROVISIONS

Examinations are conducted by specialist registered veterinarians on the ACES Examining Panel who have been endorsed by the AVA, on the understanding that each member has made adequate provision against his or her professional liability. In no event shall AVA be liable for any incidental or consequential damages arising from any negligent acts or omissions arising out of the examination.

AVA does not:

- make any warranties or representations regarding the quality, accuracy, completeness or authenticity of the information provided on any ACES Eye Examination Certificate.
- accept liability for any loss arising out of the use of said information and / or the reliance placed on it, by the owner or any other party.

The ACES Examining Panel employs the services of registered veterinary eye specialists who are extensively trained in the recognition of normal and abnormal eye conditions. This avoids the necessity to assess the skills of panellists through any other assessment system.

Subject to the normal veterinary certification standards required under the various State Acts, ACES Panellists do not accept individual or collective liability for any consequential loss arising out of the use of information provided on an ACES Certificate, or the reliance placed upon it by the owner or any other party.