



Australian Canine Eye Scheme (ACES)

RULES AND PROCEDURES

January 2008

(Revised November 2017, August 2020)

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 (ANZCVS).

The Australian Canine Eye Scheme is endorsed by the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) and administered by the Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC).

CONTENTS

I	INTRODUCTION AND MISSION STATEMENT	3
II	DETAILED RESPONSIBILITIES	4
	(A) ANZCVS OPHTHALOMOLOGY CHAPTER.....	4
	(B) AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL.....	4
	(C) ACES EXAMINING PANEL.....	5
	(D) ACES CHIEF PANELLIST.....	5
	(E) FEES CHARGED FOR ACES TESTING	6
III	MECHANISMS FOR RECORDING INDIVIDUAL BREED RESULTS	7
IV	APPEALS PROCEDURE.....	8
V	REPORTING OF BREED-SPECIFIC EYE DISEASE DATA	8
VI	PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY PROVISIONS.....	8

I Introduction and Mission Statement

The **Australian Canine Eye Scheme** (hereinafter referred to as 'ACES') is a service provided throughout Australia by registered specialist veterinary ophthalmologists. 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 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 a 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 National Kennel Council** (ANKC) 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.

Registered veterinary eye specialists who have agreed to participate in the national certification scheme will issue ACES certificates.

ACES examining panellists will appoint from their number a Chief Panellist. He or she will be responsible for keeping Panellists and the 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 Chief Panellist will 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 known hereditary eye diseases.

The 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) ANZCVS Ophthalmology Chapter

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 ANKC endorsed Australian Canine Eye Scheme certificate.

(b) Australian National Kennel Council

The ANKC 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. The 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. The Chief Panellist reports annually on all the known hereditary eye conditions in each breed and confirms the 'affected/unaffected' standard currently in force. A National Breed Council (NBC) may make a case to the Chief Panellist to add, remove or re-schedule a particular defect. In any review of the assessment standard for an eye

condition initiated by a National Breed Council, copied to ANKC and forwarded to the Chief Panellist, the decision of the Chief Panellist is final and under normal circumstances would not become eligible for further reconsideration for at least three years.

(c) The ACES Examining Panel

Registered veterinary eye specialists in each Australian State or Territory 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 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 Chief Panellist 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

A member of the ACES Examining Panel appointed by fellow panellists to the position of ACES Chief Panellist. The ACES Chief Panellist will oversee the workings of the ACES Examining Panel and the issuing of ACES Certificates, and will recommend, facilitate and communicate any changes 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 an annual review of the accepted 'unaffected / affected' criteria for those conditions.

The Chief Panellist will handle 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 ANZCVS Ophthalmology Chapter and a copy will be forwarded to the Australian National Kennel Council and all State Canine Control Councils.

The Chief Panellist will 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 Chief Panellist will report annually to the ANZCVS Ophthalmology Chapter on the certifiable hereditary eye diseases to be listed for each registered breed, providing recommendations to reconfirm, add to or revise the Known Hereditary Eye Disease Breed Schedule and the Eye Conditions Under Investigation Breed Schedule. Any changes to these two schedules will be made via the ANKC database and will automatically update conditions listed for each breed when an ACES on-line form is generated for an eye examination

Any changes to these Schedules must be reported by the ACES Chief Panellist to ANKC and each State Canine Control Council and posted on the ANKC website.

(e) 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 certificate 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 a microchip reader.**

It is also preferable the following documents 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);
- 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.

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

microchip and registration details for the sire and dam so these can be identified via the ANKC database and included on the litter certificate.

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 on the understanding that each member has made adequate provision against his or her professional liability. In no event shall the ANZCVS Ophthalmology Chapter be liable for any incidental or consequential damages arising from any negligent acts or omissions arising out of the examination.

The ANZCVS Ophthalmology Chapter 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 engages the services of registered veterinary eye specialists who are extensively trained and peer-examined 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.