

✨ Our Temperament Testing Process (6–7 Weeks of Age)

At around six to seven weeks old, each of our puppies goes through a structured temperament evaluation to help us understand their natural tendencies, confidence levels, sensitivities, and suitability for different types of homes. Most of our testing is based on the Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test, along with additional observations we've refined over many litters of Australian Shepherds.

💛 Why We Test

Early temperament testing gives us an objective look at who each puppy is becoming. While we spend every day with them and learn a lot from daily handling, play, and social interactions, a structured test allows us to see how each puppy responds in a neutral environment with standardized challenges. This helps ensure our placement decisions are thoughtful, ethical, and in the best interest of both the puppy and the family.

📋 What We Evaluate (Volhard-Based Tasks)

Here are a few examples of what we look for in testing:

- Social Attraction & Confidence:

Does the puppy come when called? Do they hesitate or confidently engage?

- Following & Engagement:

Are they people-oriented? Do they enjoy being with a handler?

- Restraint Tolerance:

How do they respond to gentle restraint—calm, wiggly, or stressed?

- Sound & Startle Recovery:

How quickly do they bounce back from a new or unexpected noise?

- Object & Problem-Solving Skills:

Interest in toys, retrieving ability, curiosity, and willingness to explore.

- Touch, Sight & Sensitivity:

Includes reaction to new textures or gentle testing of sensitivity levels.

- **Energy Levels & Drive:**

Helps us understand which puppies want a more active home and which ones prefer a calmer lifestyle.

How This Helps Match Puppies to the Right Homes

Our goal is always to place each puppy in the environment where they will thrive, not just “fit.”

This testing helps us match:

- Active families with puppies who have the confidence, drive, and curiosity to enjoy hikes, sports, and busy lifestyles.
- Laid-back families with puppies who prefer a calmer, cuddly, more easygoing temperament.
- Experienced homes with the pups who show high intelligence, strong working instincts, or very forward personalities.
- First-time dog owners with puppies who are naturally more adaptable and people-pleasing.

Testing acts as a guide, not the sole deciding factor, but it gives us extremely helpful insight when placing our puppies.

Identifying Service & Therapy Dog Candidates

Temperament testing is especially important for identifying the rare puppies who are suitable for work such as:

- Service dog training
- Therapy dog visits
- Emotional support roles

We look for traits such as:

- High tolerance to stress
- Quick recovery from startle
- Willingness to follow and engage
- Calm, thoughtful decision-making
- Lower reactivity
- Strong human connection
- Balanced energy (not overly timid or overly dominant)

Not all puppies—nor should they—fall into this category. But the ones who do often shine during this stage of testing.

✨ **Why We Wait to Assign Puppies Until Testing is Complete**

We do not allow families to choose a puppy before temperament testing because:

1. Appearance alone cannot predict temperament, health, or lifestyle suitability.
2. Matching personalities to families produces better long-term success, especially for households with kids, first-time dog owners, or special needs.
3. Puppies change dramatically between birth and 7 weeks—testing gives us the clearest picture before placement.

We always take your preferences into account, but our responsibility as their breeder is to ensure the best possible match for all involved.

Temperament testing is one of the most important tools we use to set our puppies—and our families—up for success. It reflects our commitment to producing well-rounded, confident companions who will thrive in the right environment, whether that's a cozy family home or a future career supporting someone in need.

If you have any questions about the testing process or what we look for specifically, I'm always happy to explain more!