

So You Get a Call About a Working Dog...

Quick guide from the [AAHA Working, Assistance, and Therapy Dog Guidelines](#).



Step 1: TRIAGE

- > Assess urgency
- > Be prepared to refer asap
- > Be ready to prioritize dog



Step 2: SCHEDULING

- > Allow extra time
- > Consider early or late in day
- > Ask if dog needs sedation
- > Alert team to special needs



Step 3: APPOINTMENT

- > Low stress handling is critical
- > Know this specific dog's job
- > Understand handler's need to stay with dog
- > No treats without asking



Step 4: DIAGNOSTICS

- > Prioritize early intervention
- > Do not separate dog from owner
- > Agencies may need to be consulted
- > Know unusual risk factors



Step 5: TREATMENT

- > Be aware of medication side effects
- > Be aware of breeding status
- > Understand long and short term impact on work



Step 6: FOLLOW UP

- > Be cognizant of owner needs for communication
- > Communication is critical
- > Document expected return to work

Images from:

Gems from the Guidelines: Working with working dogs
AAHA Trends[®], March 13, 2026. [Link](#).