

COGNITIVE HEALTH · AGING BRAIN

The DISHAA Cognitive Dysfunction Check-In

Canine Cognitive Dysfunction (CCD) is a progressive, age-related decline in brain function, often compared to Alzheimer's disease in people. It develops gradually, is easy to mistake for "normal aging," and is thought to affect roughly 1 in 7 dogs over age 8 — yet it is under-recognized because the early signs are subtle and build slowly. Regular check-ins give you and your veterinary team an objective record to catch changes early.

What is DISHAA?

DISHAA is a memorable way to organize the six behavioral domains that shift with cognitive aging. Working through each domain with your dog in mind — and repeating the check-in periodically — helps you and your vet see patterns over time rather than relying on a single snapshot.

D**DISORIENTATION**

- Trouble navigating around familiar furniture or objects; goes to the hinge side of the door
- Stares blankly at walls, floor, or into space
- Doesn't recognize familiar people or pets
- Gets lost in the home or yard; slower to respond to sights or sounds

I**SOCIAL INTERACTIONS**

- More irritable, fearful, or aggressive with visitors, family, or other pets
- Less interested in greeting, approaching, or being affectionate

S**SLEEP/WAKE CYCLES**

- Restless, paces, sleeps less, or wakes and wanders overnight
- Vocalizes (barks or whines) during the night

H**HOUSESOILING, LEARNING & MEMORY**

- Slower to learn new tasks or respond to known commands/name
- House-soils, or gives less warning before needing to go out
- Harder to hold attention; more easily distracted

A**ACTIVITY**

- Less interest in exploring or playing with toys, people, other pets
- Aimless pacing or wandering; repetitive circling, licking, chewing, or staring

A**ANXIETY**

- More anxious when separated from you
- More reactive to sights/sounds, or more fearful of new places and situations



DISHAA Cognitive Assessment

OWNER CHECK-IN

DATE	OWNER NAME		
PET NAME	AGE	SEX	
SPAYED/NEUTERED	BREED	WEIGHT	
BODY CONDITION SCORE (1-9)	CURRENT DIET		
CURRENT MEDICATIONS & DOSAGE/FREQUENCY			

How to score:

For each item, mark how much this has changed or progressed since your dog was around 8 years old.

☐ 0 = None ☐ 1 = Mild ☐ 2 = Moderate ☐ 3 = Severe

BEHAVIORAL SIGN

0 1 2 3

D — DISORIENTATION

Appears stuck or struggles to get around furniture/objects; goes to the hinge side of the door	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stares blankly at walls, floor, or into space	☐	☐	☐	☐
Doesn't recognize familiar people or familiar pets	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gets lost in the home or yard	☐	☐	☐	☐
Seems less responsive to sights or sounds than before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Disorientation subtotal (for your reference)				

I — SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

More irritable, fearful, or aggressive with visitors, family, or other animals	☐	☐	☐	☐
Less interested in approaching, greeting, or being petted/affectionate	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Interactions subtotal				

S — SLEEP/WAKE CYCLES

Paces, seems restless, sleeps less, or wakes/wanders at night	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vocalizes (barks/whines) at night	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sleep/Wake subtotal — carry all subtotals to Page 3				

Notes for This Check-In

What prompted this check-in? What have you noticed at home recently?

Tip: Repeat this check-in monthly and log it in the Pet's Piece of Mind app — a single score is a snapshot, but the trend over time is what helps your vet catch cognitive changes early.

DISHAA Cognitive Assessment — continued

OWNER CHECK-IN

BEHAVIORAL SIGN	0	1	2	3
H — HOUSESOILING, LEARNING & MEMORY				
Slower to learn new tasks, or to respond to previously known commands/name/routines	☐	☐	☐	☐
House-soils (urine ___ and/or stool ___), or gives less warning before needing to go out	☐	☐	☐	☐
Harder to get their attention; more easily distracted, less focused	☐	☐	☐	☐
<i>Housoiling, Learning & Memory subtotal</i>				
A — ACTIVITY				
Less interested in exploring or playing with toys, family members, other pets	☐	☐	☐	☐
More activity, including aimless pacing or wandering	☐	☐	☐	☐
Repetitive behaviors (e.g., circling ___ chewing ___ licking ___ staring ___)	☐	☐	☐	☐
<i>Activity subtotal</i>				
A — ANXIETY				
More anxious when separated from you	☐	☐	☐	☐
More reactive/fearful of sights or sounds	☐	☐	☐	☐
More fearful of places/situations (new environments, going outdoors)	☐	☐	☐	☐
<i>Anxiety subtotal</i>				

TOTAL DISHAA SCORE

Sum every item across pages 2 & 3

4–15

SIGNS CONSISTENT WITH MILD CCD

16–33

SIGNS CONSISTENT WITH MODERATE CCD

> 33

SIGNS CONSISTENT WITH SEVERE CCD

Once complete, share this with your veterinarian — via the Pet's Piece of Mind app or by bringing this sheet to your visit. Your vet will interpret these results alongside a physical exam and any recommended diagnostics; other age-related or medical conditions can produce similar signs, and more than one issue can be present at once. This check-in is a screening and monitoring aid, not a diagnosis. Scoring framework adapted from the DISHAA acronym described by Landsberg GM et al. and Salvin HE, McGreevy PD, Sachdev PS, Valenzuela MJ. Underdiagnosis of canine cognitive dysfunction: a cross-sectional survey of older companion dogs. *Vet J.* 2010;184(3):277–81.

FOR CLINICAL USE

EXAMINING VETERINARIAN / CLINIC

TOTAL SCORE / CCD CATEGORY

DIFFERENTIALS CONSIDERED / DIAGNOSTICS RECOMMENDED

PLAN / FOLLOW-UP