

# AUSTRALIAN CANINE EYE SCHEME (ACES)

## Issue Analysis – Q&A

(Prepared by Members of the Labrador Retriever National Breed Council)

<p>1. What is ACES?</p>	<p>ACES stands for Australian Canine Eye Scheme a joint initiative between the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) &amp; the Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC)</p>
<p>2. Where did the concept come from?</p>	<p>It was the result of about 9 years of negotiations between the AVA and the ANKC Canine Health Committee. For a majority of that time the Chair of the ANKC CHC was Bob Maver a member of the LRCV who has spent many years studying canine hereditary diseases.</p>
<p>3. Why is there a need for it?</p>	<p>ANKC needed availability of eye testing Nationally Eye testing needed to be done by qualified eye specialists only Standard examination protocols were needed Eye assessment was quite subjective – uniform assessment criteria were needed via agreed standard reference samples (photographic) Results needed to be recorded and analyzed to determine incidence of diseases and trends Eye specialists needed to consider genetic test results in their assessments where available</p>
<p>4. Why do eye specialists need to consider genetic test results? Clinical diagnoses should be completely independent of genetic results.</p>	<p>Breeders need to have as much disease test results information as possible to enable them to make sensible breeding decisions. Australian eye test results were not accepted overseas There was no appeal system – if the owner did not accept the result the option was to go elsewhere for another test.</p>
<p>5. As guardians of their breeds Breed Councils needed to have the major say in testing programs and decisions on open or closed registers. However, some of the stated requirements in the ACES documentation prevent this eg.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>"and for certain higher risk breeds the ANKC has the power to insist on an unaffected test report as a prerequisite to litter registration"</i></li> <li>➤ <i>"Examining panelists will be discouraged from entering into any discussion on matters concerning particular eye conditions or their inheritance in any given breed. Such enquiries should be directed through the relevant National Breed Council to the ACES Chief Panelist"</i></li> <li>➤ <i>"the ANKC has introduced a system of <b>restricted litter registrations</b> in which both parents must be certified as unaffected or within agreed limits for that particular characteristic for the registration of the resulting litter to be processed"</i></li> <li>➤ <i>"so that no single panelist may continue to exert undue influence (positive or negative, intentional or by default) over the effective gene pool available to breeders through the application of an excessively rigid (or lenient) assessment standard"</i></li> </ul>	<p>This issue will be referred to the Chief Panelist by the NLRBC via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the Aces Information for owners booklet.</p>
<p>6. Absolutely – so when do the NATIONAL breed Councils get their chance for input and to make recommendations?</p>	<p>The process is set out in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.</p>

<p><b>7.</b> What are the drawbacks of ACES</p>	<p>More paperwork, but the benefits of uniform testing and recording greatly outweigh that, allowing accurate statistical analysis of disease incidence and trends. Positive identification is required to avoid duplication, but positive ID of companion animals is likely nationally in the short term. The cost is slightly higher to cover the extra paperwork, use of the AVA data base and analysis of results.</p>
<p><b>8.</b> What was wrong with the "old" system?</p>	<p>None of the above were available. Breeders were unsure of the accuracy of eye assessments, knowing that different examiners could give different results. There was no collation of results to allow realistic estimates of disease incidence or a basis for research.</p>
<p><b>9.</b> Does ACES require the ophthalmologists to self educate to improve their diagnostic capabilities?</p>	<p>This question is to be directed to the Chief Panelist via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.</p>
<p><b>10.</b> What are the nett benefits?</p>	<p>The above points have all been covered in an integrated scheme. The scheme is purely voluntary – there is no compulsion to test eyes under the scheme</p>
<p><b>11.</b> Will there be any limitations / bars imposed by AVA/ANKC with regards breeding?</p>	<p>There will be no bars to breeding.</p>
<p><b>12.</b> What will be the required frequency of ACES physical eye examinations</p>	<p>No difference. Because a dog has a genetic disease test result does not alter the need for clinical eye examinations before mating in most instances, as there is more than one disease to consider in most breeds.</p>
<p><b>13.</b> Access to Veterinary Ophthalmologists (regional and rural areas)</p>	<p>National coverage is a key component of the scheme.</p>
<p><b>14.</b> Anecdotally, for those breeds needing litter screening, national coverage is not available. One of the stated requirements under ACES is that "Breeders of pedigree litters <b>in any breed</b> are advised to have the eyes of all pups checked by an ACES Panellist before sale, to protect their interests under Consumer Protection law in the event of a buyer dispute". How can breeders possibly meet this expectation if access is not available?</p>	<p>This question is to be directed to the Chief Panelist via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.</p>
<p><b>15.</b> DNA testing for PRA identifies <u>carrier</u> dogs which is something ACES can not do.</p>	<p>This has always been the fundamental failing of physical eye examination results – DNA now gives breeders a powerful tool by identifying carriers that go undetected under the ACES scheme – the two methods should be used by breeders in unison to give a total picture.</p>
<p><b>16.</b> Costs are always a consideration – how much will it cost for an ACES test and how much for an Optigen DNA test</p>	<p>Currently the recommended fee for an ACES eye test is \$66.00 per dog and this test should be conducted annually for all breeding stock. Genetic Technologies charges \$218.00 per dog for a DNA swab test and report for prcd PRA – this is a once only fee and determines whether a dog is Clear, Affected or (most importantly) a Carrier of the disease.</p>
<p><b>17.</b> What do breeders do with the results?</p>	<p>Use them in making informed breeding decisions and in promoting their kennel and litters.</p>
<p><b>18.</b> What happens to the data and who has access to the data?</p>	<p>Data is stored for statistical analysis and breeding advice.</p>
<p><b>19.</b> Where? Where are the details of my three dogs that I've had tested under ACES right this very minute? Has the AVA got a database that can cope with this information, without any loss or confusion of data? Or will the records end up in shoe boxes like the hip and elbow records?</p>	<p>Open register data is available to breeders, owners and the public for benefits as discussed above. Closed register data is kept confidential but included in the statistical analysis and details available only to the owner. Open register data will be downloaded to the ANKC database when it is available.</p>
<p><b>20.</b> When is this likely to be – a ball park figure – weeks, months or years?</p>	<p>Dogs NSW have offered the other AKC Member Bodies the opportunity to Sign up to the new computer program that they are developing. It has the capacity for a Hereditary Diseases Database. Negotiations are still ongoing and there should be a resolution this year. Other individual member bodies may have the capacity to store the information.</p>

<p><b>21.</b> DNA markers – will this new technology make physical eye examinations obsolete?</p>	<p>Not in most cases. Genetic disease testing is specific to the breed and disease. Most breeds have more than one disease to monitor.</p>
<p><b>22.</b> With the rapid development in identifying new DNA markers it is conceivable that within the next 5 years all known hereditary eye diseases could be identified by a simple swab test. If a NBC commits to ACES testing now as a prerequisite to breeding / litter registration don't they run the risk of ACES becoming obsolete?</p>	<p>If DNA testing were to reach the point where markers for all known eye diseases within a particular breed could be identified then conceivably DNA could replace ACES as the scheme of choice.</p>
<p><b>23.</b> Why is it that "No ACES panelist is authorized to discuss the assessment criteria for a particular condition at the time of the examination or negotiate any variation in the emphasis to be placed on the seriousness of the presenting eye signs". Surely if we (the breeders) are the ones paying for a service we are entitled to know the results at the time of consultation.</p>	<p>This question is to be directed to the Chief Panelist via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.</p>
<p><b>24.</b> Is there an intention by AVA / ANKC to have absolute control of which dogs &amp; bitches are deemed eligible for breeding in the future? If ACES becomes the only recognized / approved form of Eye Testing in Australia then isn't it conceivable that upper limit hip and elbow scores may be the next issue on the radar?</p>	<p>Positively not! The concept of the scheme was initiated with the ANKC Canine Health Committee for all the reasons given above – for the benefit of our dogs! The successes of the BVA and Swedish schemes in disease control are proof of the advantages, but the current AVA/ANKC scheme has avoided their disadvantages and added some, to the extent that the Chief Panelist of the BVA scheme has declared this scheme as the international model.</p>
<p><b>25.</b> But the "ACES - Information for owners" document clearly states (quote) <i>ANKC has the power to insist on an unaffected test report as a prerequisite to litter registration.</i> So who are we to believe?</p>	<p>This issue is to be directed to the Chief Panelist via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.</p>
<p><b>26.</b> Mention is made of the success of similar schemes in European countries like Sweden. Shouldn't it also be noted that in countries where this type of scheme has been introduced and breeding suitability is governed by results that breed type has been severely affected</p>	<p>This question is to be directed to the Chief Panelist via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.</p>
<p><b>27.</b> "By seeking to be placed on an <b>ANKC-endorsed Open Register</b> for inherited disease surveillance, etc etc etc" Is a direct quote from the ACES documentation – how did an eye scheme become an ANKC endorsed Open Register for inherited disease surveillance?</p>	<p>This issue is to be directed to the Chief Panelist via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.</p>
<p><b>28.</b> Isn't ACES just an attempt by the AVA to take control of the data before DNA companies "beat them to the punch"?</p>	<p>No, the Eye Specialists have acknowledged the value of genetic testing and included it in their assessments where it is available.</p>
<p><b>29.</b> What are the differences between Open and Closed breed registers?</p>	<p>Closed register data is kept confidential but included in the statistical analysis and details available only to the owner. Open register data will be downloaded to the ANKC database when it is available. The power to decide on open or closed is with the breed councils.</p>
<p><b>30.</b> It would appear that if a NBC decides to keep results for that breed on a Closed register that they will be contacted by the AVA and "persuaded" to change their mind.</p>	<p>If an ANKC Breed Survey has resulted in a Closed Register then it would require another Survey to overturn the decision. It would be doubtful if the AVA would have the resources to lobby all Labrador Breeders/Owners for a change.</p>
<p><b>31.</b> If a breeder decides not to ACES eye test will they be prevented from breeding?</p>	<p>There is nothing in ACES which provides for this.</p>
<p><b>32.</b> Yes, there is – it is there in black and white.</p>	<p>The eye specialists may make recommendations to assist breeders but they have no power to require anything of that nature.</p>

<b>33.</b> If a breeder decides not to ACES eye test will the ANKC at some time in the future prevent litters bred from untested parents from being registered?	The ANKC would only implement a scheme of mandatory eye testing of sire and dam as a prerequisite to litter registration if a recommendation to that effect were to be received from the NBC of that particular breed.
<b>34.</b> Then this statement needs to be included in the ACES documentation.	See issues of Concern - below
<b>35.</b> If a litter is bred from non ACES tested parents will the litter be registered?	ACES do not deal with anything like that – it is not the business of the AVA or eye specialists. Any decisions on limiting breeding are only possible within the breed.

### **ISSUES of CONCERN**

The response to Q.34: <i>The ANKC would only implement a scheme of mandatory eye testing of sire and dam as a prerequisite to litter registration if a recommendation to that effect were to be received from the NBC of that particular breed.</i> needs to be included in the ACES documentation.	The request to include this information is to be directed to the Chief panelist via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.
According to the ACES documentation, the individual ophthalmologists have no right to even discuss the outcome of the eye test, let alone advise or recommend on breeding decisions	The Chief Panelist will be requested by the NLRBC to clarify this statement via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.
The Chief Panellist must be made aware of the framework by which the NBC's operate – no decision can be made without a National survey of members and their vote, which as we have experienced in the past takes at least 6 months.	For the information of the Chief Panelist.
Frequency of testing is a breed by breed issue that needs to be addressed as such. Speaking solely about Labs, with a PRA DNA certificate, there is no need to test eyes annually – as a young dog and then several times during the dog's life, probably yes, but certainly not annually.	This issue will be referred to the Chief panelist by the NLRBC via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.
The documentation suggests that there is a sympathetic appeals system but it would appear to lack transparency. "Any appeal must be lodged in writing within 30 days of the examination being conducted. The owner will then take the dog together with the disputed certificate for examination by another ACES panelist"  Having to provide the disputed certificate prior to the retest indicates the lack of transparency.  The retest within 30 days requirement is impossible in practical terms in some states and regional areas.	This issue will be referred to the Chief panelist by the NLRBC via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.
The paragraph: <i>"and for certain higher risk breeds, ANKC has the power to insist on an 'unaffected' test report as a prerequisite to litter registration."</i>  This must be removed – not negotiable.	The Chief Panelist and the ESSC will be requested to remove this paragraph via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.

<p>16. Obviously having a scheme that is Internationally recognized is desirable, however the ANKC (a broad term for the representatives of all breeders) needs to have closer consultation with said breeders, to enable them to represent those breeders more sympathetically.</p>	<p>The NLRBC will request the ANKC Health Committee to address the issue of closer consultation.</p>
<p>The scheme is not voluntary-ophthalmologists will not test your dogs' eyes unless it happens under the ACES scheme – I was told this specifically and clearly when I booked my dogs in. Anecdotally, you can get your dogs' eyes examined under an ordinary consultation – cost – approx \$145 per dog !!!!</p>	<p>The Chief Panelist will be requested by the NLRBC to clarify this statement via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.</p>
<p>The ACES scheme is supposed to be voluntary but there appears to be huge implications to particular breeds once the paperwork is signed!</p>	<p>This issue will be referred to the Chief panelist by the NLRBC via the process outlined in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the ACES Information for Owners document.</p>