

ESTCA

European Standard for Travel with Canine Animals

Standard v1.1

Canine Travel Readiness Certification

Document: ESTCA-STD-001-v1.1

Classification: Public

Effective date: 1 May 2026

Supersedes: ESTCA-STD-001-v1.0

Review date: 1 May 2027

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Public register: estca.eu

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Preamble

The European Standard for Travel with Canine Animals (ESTCA) establishes a transparent and verifiable framework for certifying dogs as behaviourally suitable for travel in commercial aircraft cabins across Europe. The standard is published openly. Any airline, transport operator, trainer or owner may rely on it; airlines are encouraged to make conformity with ESTCA a mandatory condition of carriage.

This standard exists because European aviation policy is shifting. National and EU-level developments through 2025 and 2026 have opened the cabin door to dogs that were previously carried only in the hold or refused entirely. Where a dog now sits beside a paying passenger, the question is no longer whether the animal is permitted, but whether the animal is ready. Trust alone is not a safety standard. ESTCA replaces trust with assessment.

Stichting ESTCA is an independent, non-commercial foundation registered in the Netherlands. The standard is developed and maintained by the ESTCA Technical Advisory Board, comprising veterinary behaviourists, professional trainers, and animal welfare specialists. The standard is reviewed annually and may be updated to reflect operational experience and new regulatory context.

Guiding principle

Where any provision of this standard is in tension with the welfare of the individual animal, the welfare of the animal shall prevail. No dog shall be certified if, in the professional judgement of the assessing trainer or veterinarian, travel would compromise the animal's physical or psychological wellbeing — regardless of the owner's wishes, scheduling, or fees paid.

Why a public standard

When every airline writes its own rules, the same dog can be approved by one carrier and refused by another — and dog owners, ground staff and crew are left guessing. A single, publicly available standard removes that guesswork. It also lets the people who actually meet the dog — accredited trainers — say no on objective grounds, before a problem reaches the cabin. ESTCA is offered free of license fees; a small administrative fee covers trainer accreditation and registry operations.

How the standard is delivered today

certified-estca.eu is, at the date of this revision, the sole operational platform on which trainers are accredited, training records are kept, and certifications are issued. Every ESTCA-accredited trainer is listed on certified-estca.eu and operates through it; every certification flows from certified-estca.eu into the public ESTCA Register at estca.eu. A trainer who is not on certified-estca.eu is not an ESTCA-accredited trainer, and a certification that did not originate on certified-estca.eu is not an ESTCA certification. ESTCA may admit additional platforms in future revisions of this standard.

Part A — Scope, Roles & Definitions

A.1 Scope

§ A.1.1

This standard applies to the behavioural assessment, training and certification of dogs (*Canis familiaris*) intended for travel in the passenger cabin of commercial aircraft operating to, from, or within Europe.

§ A.1.2

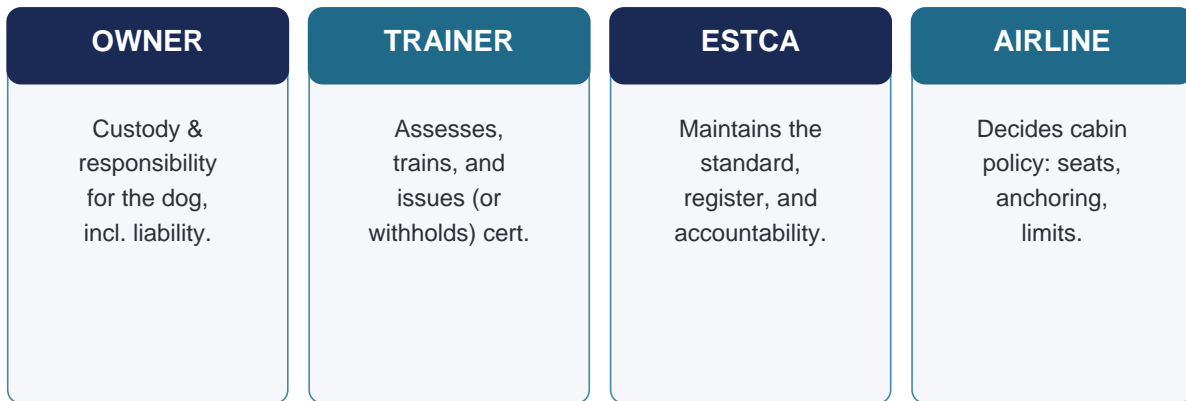
The standard is voluntary in law and binding in practice on any trainer, organisation or carrier that declares conformity with it. Declarations of conformity, accredited trainers, and certified dogs are all recorded in the public ESTCA Register.

§ A.1.3

This standard does not replace airline-specific pet policies, national veterinary entry requirements, or the EU Pet Passport system. It certifies behavioural readiness only. Operational matters — seat allocation, anchoring, equipment, in-flight protocol, the number of dogs permitted per flight — are decisions for the airline. Part G describes the practices airlines are encouraged to adopt; the standard does not require them.

A.2 Roles

ESTCA works because four parties each carry a distinct, complementary role. None of the four can substitute for another.



The owner is responsible for the dog at all times before, during and after travel, including any liability for damage or injury caused by the dog. **The trainer** applies professional judgement to the assessment and is accountable, individually, for every certification they issue. **Stichting ESTCA** maintains the standard and the public register and operates the accountability process. **The airline** decides whether to accept ESTCA-certified dogs and on what operational conditions.

A.3 Definitions

Canine animal. Any domestic dog (*Canis familiaris*) aged sixteen weeks or older, regardless of breed, weight or pedigree status.

ESTCA-accredited trainer. A professional dog trainer holding a current, unsuspended ESTCA accreditation, listed in the public ESTCA Register, and bound by the ESTCA Code of Conduct.

Certification. A formal determination, recorded in the ESTCA Register, that an individual dog has been assessed across all five areas in Part D and meets the standard.

ESTCA Register. The publicly accessible database maintained by Stichting ESTCA at [estca.eu](https://www.estca.eu), searchable by passport or microchip number, in which all trainer accreditations and dog certifications are recorded.

Certified-ESTCA platform. The operational platform at [certified-estca.eu](https://www.certified-estca.eu) on which trainers are accredited, training records are held, and certifications are issued. Currently the sole platform recognised by Stichting ESTCA for these purposes.

Microchip number. The unique 15-digit ISO 11784/11785 compliant transponder number implanted in the dog, used together with the EU Pet Passport as an identifier in the Register.

Welfare baseline. The minimum health and temperament conditions a dog must meet before any assessment may begin, defined in Part B.

Final assessment. The trainer's holistic professional judgement, recorded against the Annex I scorecard, that the dog meets the standard across all five areas (§ D.5). It is observed across the trainer's preparation work and supported by audit footage.

Cabin travel. Carriage of a dog within the passenger cabin of a commercial aircraft, on a seat or floor space allocated by the airline.

Carrier of record. The airline operating the flight on which an ESTCA-certified dog travels. The carrier of record sets the operational conditions for the travel of that dog.

Part B — Welfare Baseline

Part B establishes the absolute prerequisites a dog must meet before any ESTCA assessment may begin. These are not performance thresholds — they are gate conditions. No dog may be assessed without meeting every requirement in this Part. The trainer is the gatekeeper for this Part and bears the professional responsibility for refusing enrolment when any requirement is not met.

§ B.1

The dog shall be microchipped with an ISO 11784/11785 compliant transponder and hold a valid EU Pet Passport or equivalent veterinary travel documentation.

§ B.2

The dog shall be aged at least sixteen weeks at the time of enrolment and shall have completed a primary vaccination course including rabies.

§ B.3

The dog shall present in a body condition score of between 3 and 7 on the nine-point WSAVA scale, as assessed by the enrolling trainer or a veterinarian. Dogs that are visibly underweight or obese shall not be enrolled until remediated.

§ B.4

The dog shall not have a documented history of unprovoked aggressive behaviour resulting in a bite causing injury to a person within the preceding 24 months. The trainer shall make reasonable enquiries of the owner at enrolment and may decline to enrol on the basis of those enquiries.

§ B.5

Dogs of brachycephalic breeds listed in Annex II shall not, by default, be enrolled or certified under this standard. The combination of the upper-airway anatomy characteristic of these breeds and the conditions of pressurised cabin travel presents a welfare risk that ESTCA is not in a position to underwrite. The decision to accept such a dog rests with the airline on the airline's own veterinary, operational and risk grounds. A trainer shall enrol a brachycephalic dog only on prior written confirmation from the airline that the dog will be accepted on the intended route, supported by a current veterinary clearance dated within 30 days of enrolment. Trainers should otherwise advise the owner not to fly the dog.

§ B.6

The dog shall not be under veterinary sedation, or have received sedative medication within 48 hours, during any assessment activity.

§ B.7

The trainer has a positive duty to refuse or discontinue assessment of any dog where, in their professional judgement, an underlying physical condition, anxiety profile, or general lack of suitability would make cabin travel inappropriate, even where the formal criteria of Part B are not breached. A refusal under § B.7 shall be recorded against the trainer's file but does not count as a fail for the dog.

NOTE — If any condition is not met the dog may not begin the programme. The trainer shall advise the owner on remediation where possible and invite re-enrolment at a later date. A welfare refusal is not a fail and does not prejudice future enrolment.

Part C — Trainer Accreditation

ESTCA certification may only be delivered and assessed by trainers holding a current ESTCA accreditation. The trainer is the human point of accountability for every certification issued. Where dogs that misbehave in flight are traced back to a single trainer, that trainer's accreditation is at stake (Part F).

C.1 Eligibility Requirements

§ C.1.1

To apply for ESTCA accreditation, a candidate must demonstrate professional competence by satisfying at least one of the following:

- (a) A current professional dog training certification from a recognised body (including but not limited to CPDT-KA, CCAB, IAABC, or a national kennel-club instructor qualification);
- (b) A minimum of two years of documented, professional dog training experience with verifiable client references; or
- (c) A degree or diploma in animal behaviour, veterinary science, or applied animal welfare from a recognised institution.

§ C.1.2

The candidate shall hold valid professional liability insurance covering dog-training activities in the jurisdiction(s) in which they intend to deliver the ESTCA programme. Specific cover requirements are set out in § C.4.

C.2 ESTCA Train-the-Trainer Module

§ C.2.1

All candidates shall pass the ESTCA Train-the-Trainer theoretical examination before assessing any dog. The examination is delivered online via certified-estca.eu and covers the standard, the welfare baseline, the five areas of assessment, the Code of Conduct, and registry and audit procedures. The pass mark and re-sit policy are published by Stichting ESTCA.

§ C.2.2

The Train-the-Trainer requirement may evolve. Stichting ESTCA expects, in time, to introduce additional in-person or video-based components — for example a recorded demonstration of an assessment for review by the Technical Advisory Board. Any such extension will be announced in advance and applied prospectively; trainers accredited under the current theoretical examination retain their accreditation subject to ongoing compliance with this standard.

§ C.2.3

On passing the examination, the trainer is listed in the public ESTCA Register and is onboarded to certified-estca.eu, the operational platform from which the trainer will manage training records, scorecards, audit footage uploads, and the issuance of certifications. A trainer who is not active on certified-estca.eu is not an ESTCA-accredited trainer for the purposes of this standard.

C.3 Code of Conduct

§ C.3.1

All ESTCA-accredited trainers shall:

- (a) Use training methods based on positive reinforcement; the use of aversive tools (including but not limited to prong collars, shock collars, and choke chains) is prohibited within the ESTCA programme.
- (b) Assess each dog honestly and refuse to certify a dog that does not meet the standard, regardless of the owner's expectations, scheduling pressure, or fees paid.
- (c) Decline to enrol or withdraw any dog where, in the trainer's professional judgement, the certification process would cause undue stress or compromise the animal's welfare.
- (d) Maintain the confidentiality of owner information and not share registry data except as required for ESTCA audit purposes or as compelled by law.
- (e) Report any safety incident involving a dog they have certified, of which they become aware, to Stichting ESTCA without delay.

C.4 Insurance & Liability

§ C.4.1

ESTCA-accredited trainers are **strongly encouraged** to hold professional indemnity and public liability insurance covering their training, assessment and certification activities. Stichting ESTCA does not act as an insurer, does not underwrite trainer activity, and accepts no liability arising from individual certification decisions.

§ C.4.2

Liability for damage or injury caused by a dog rests, by default, with the dog's owner. Nothing in this standard shifts that liability to the trainer, to Stichting ESTCA, or to the carrier. Airlines may impose additional insurance, indemnity or carriage-condition requirements as they see fit and may make those requirements binding on the owner as a condition of carriage.

§ C.4.3

Trainers shall make their insurance status visible to owners on enrolment and disclose any limitations of cover before payment is taken.

C.5 Annual Re-accreditation

§ C.5.1

Trainer accreditation is valid for twelve months. Re-accreditation requires payment of the annual licensing fee, confirmation of continued compliance with the Code of Conduct, submission of one sample audit recording for quality review (§ D.5.1), and evidence of continued professional development in dog training or animal behaviour.

§ C.5.2

An accreditation that lapses for more than 90 days expires; the former trainer must re-apply from § C.1 and re-take the Train-the-Trainer module.

Part D — Dog Certification: Five Areas of Behavioural Assessment

Every dog presented for ESTCA certification is assessed across the same five areas. The areas are equally weighted; a single area not met means the dog is not certified. The order of delivery, the number of sessions, and the specific exercises used are matters of professional judgement for the assessing trainer (§ D.6) — the standard prescribes *what* is assessed, not *how* the trainer arrives at it.



Five equally-weighted areas. Assessment may be sequential, interleaved, or revisited as the individual dog requires. Final certification is issued only on the basis of a recorded Integrated Travel Simulation (Area 5).

D.1 Area 1 — Foundation Behaviour & Temperament

Purpose. To verify the welfare baseline (Part B), assess starting temperament, and confirm the foundational obedience needed before any travel-specific work begins.

§ D.1.1 What is assessed

The trainer shall verify all welfare-baseline conditions of Part B; observe the dog's response to the training environment, unfamiliar people, and routine handling; and confirm that the dog can reliably perform sit, down, stay (30 seconds minimum) and recall.

§ D.1.2 Standard

PASS — All Part B requirements are met; the dog demonstrates the four foundation behaviours; the dog shows no aggressive response to the trainer or other persons present.

FAIL — Any Part B requirement is not met; OR the dog shows unprovoked aggression; OR the dog cannot perform the foundation behaviours after reasonable, welfare-respecting attempts.

D.2 Area 2 — Settled Behaviour in Confined Space

Purpose. To verify the dog can remain calm in a dedicated seat space beside the owner for an extended period, in a configuration representative of cabin conditions.

§ D.2.1 What is assessed

The dog shall settle in one of two configurations chosen by the trainer to suit the dog: (a) on a mat or bed in the floor space in front of a seat (representative of floor placement), or (b) inside a travel carrier or crate positioned and secured on a seat (representative of carrier-on-seat placement). In either configuration the owner remains seated immediately beside the dog; people pass within one metre at intervals; and the settled period builds to a minimum of 20 minutes of continuous calm behaviour.

§ D.2.2 Standard

PASS — The dog settles within 5 minutes of being placed and remains calm for 20 continuous minutes without persistent vocalisation (more than two separate barking or whining episodes) and without persistent attempts to leave the designated space.

FAIL — The dog cannot settle within 10 minutes; OR vocalises persistently; OR repeatedly leaves the designated space despite redirection.

D.3 Area 3 — Environmental Resilience

***Purpose.** To verify the dog's resilience to the unfamiliar sensory environment of air travel — noise, crowds, movement and unexpected stimuli.*

§ D.3.1 What is assessed

The trainer exposes the dog to a graded set of stimuli representative of travel conditions: sudden loud sounds at a volume the trainer judges representative of airport and cabin noise; rolling luggage passing within two metres; at least three unfamiliar people moving around the dog simultaneously; another calm dog at a distance of no less than three metres; and an unfamiliar indoor environment different from the dog's usual training location.

§ D.3.2 Standard

PASS — No panic response to any stimulus. Mild alertness (ears forward, oriented to the stimulus) is acceptable provided the dog returns to a calm state within 30 seconds with at most a single verbal reassurance from the owner.

FAIL — A panic response (bolting, cowering, persistent trembling, or aggressive lunging) that does not self-resolve within 60 seconds; OR aggressive behaviour toward any person or animal.

D.4 Area 4 — Equipment Tolerance & Handler Interaction

***Purpose.** To verify the dog's acceptance of wearing a muzzle or head collar for an extended period and its composure when approached and handled by an unfamiliar person.*

§ D.4.1 What is assessed

The dog wears a properly fitted basket muzzle or head collar — chosen so that the dog can pant and drink freely — for a continuous period of at least 30 minutes while settled in the configuration from Area 2. During this period an unfamiliar person (not the trainer or owner) shall approach the dog, speak to the owner, and briefly touch the dog's head and shoulder area, simulating a cabin-crew welfare check. The owner shall also leave the dog's line of sight for three minutes while the dog remains settled.

§ D.4.2 Standard

PASS — The dog wears the muzzle for 30 minutes without persistent pawing (≤ 3 attempts to remove); accepts handling by the unfamiliar person without aggression or excessive fear response; and remains settled during the 3-minute owner absence without persistent vocalisation.

FAIL — Cannot tolerate the muzzle for the required duration; OR shows aggression when handled; OR shows severe distress during owner absence (continuous barking, howling, or destructive behaviour).

D.5 Area 5 — Integrated Travel Readiness (Final Assessment)

Purpose. To form, and record, the trainer's holistic professional judgement that the dog meets the standard across all four preceding areas reliably and concurrently. Certification is issued on the basis of this judgement.

§ D.5.1 What is assessed

The trainer shall confirm — by direct observation across the preparation work — that the dog can be relied upon to demonstrate the elements of Areas 1 to 4 together, in conditions the trainer judges representative of cabin travel. The trainer chooses how to compose this assessment: a discrete travel-simulation session, or cumulative observation across normal training sessions, or a combination of the two. The standard does not prescribe a fixed duration, sequence or location.

What the trainer must satisfy themselves of, before issuing certification, is that **each element of the Annex I scorecard has been observed reliably** — not once or in ideal conditions, but consistently enough that the trainer is willing to put their accreditation behind it (Part F).

§ D.5.2 Audit recording

The trainer shall upload at least one video clip — drawn from any part of the preparation work or from any travel-simulation session — to **certified-estca.eu** within 48 hours of issuing the certification, for quality-review audit. There is no fixed length: a single representative minute may be sufficient for one dog, a full forty-minute simulation may be appropriate for another. The trainer chooses the footage that best evidences the dog's readiness against the standard, applying their professional judgement.

Stichting ESTCA may, at any time, request additional footage or supporting records from the trainer in connection with a quality review (Part F). Where the footage submitted is in ESTCA's view insufficient to evidence the standard, the certification may be set to *Under Review* until the trainer remedies the gap. Persistent failure to provide adequate audit footage is grounds for measures under § F.4.

§ D.5.3 Pass criteria

Each element of the Annex I scorecard must be marked *Meets Standard* on the basis of observation across the preparation. There is no averaging — a single *Does Not Meet Standard* on any element means certification is not issued.

§ D.5.4 Automatic fail conditions

The following, observed at any point during the preparation work, prevent certification regardless of other scores:

- (1) Any aggressive behaviour (growling, snapping, biting or lunging) directed at any person or animal under conditions representative of cabin travel.
- (2) Persistent vocalisation when settled — defined as repeated barking or whining episodes that the dog does not learn to self-manage over the course of preparation.

- (3) A panic response that does not self-resolve within 60 seconds and does not extinguish over preparation.
- (4) Persistent attempts to remove the muzzle that do not extinguish over preparation.
- (5) Repeated defecating or urinating in confined-space practice (excluding marking behaviour in arrival exercises).

D.6 Delivery & Professional Judgement

The standard does not prescribe a number of sessions. The number of sessions, the time spent on each area, the order in which areas are introduced, and the choice of training methods within the Code of Conduct (§ C.3) are matters of professional judgement for the assessing trainer.

A confident adult dog with prior travel exposure may be ready in a small number of sessions; a young or sensitive dog may need many. A trainer may interleave areas, return to earlier work as the dog progresses, or pause assessment if the dog regresses. The elements of Annex I may be ticked off across the trainer's normal sessions rather than in a single staged event. What the trainer may not do is sign off elements they have not actually observed, or certify a dog whose performance across the preparation does not support the standard (§ D.5).

The trainer shall maintain a brief preparation log for each dog recording the dates and broad content of preparation work. The log is not submitted with the certification but must be available on request to Stichting ESTCA in the event of a quality review.

D.7 Withholding Certification & Re-enrolment

§ D.7.1

Where, at the conclusion of preparation, the trainer is not able to mark every element of Annex I as *Meets Standard*, the trainer shall withhold certification, explain the outstanding elements to the owner, and either continue preparation work or recommend re-enrolment at a later date. Withholding is not appealable; the trainer's professional judgement is the basis of the standard.

§ D.7.2

Where preparation is discontinued and the owner wishes to try again — whether with the same trainer or a different ESTCA-accredited trainer — a minimum interval of eight weeks shall pass before fresh enrolment, to allow remediation work to take effect. The new preparation period is at the receiving trainer's discretion.

Part E — Certification, Registry & Verification

E.1 Certification Issuance

§ E.1.1

When a dog has met the standard in all five areas, the trainer shall issue the certification on **certified-estca.eu** within 48 hours of the final assessment. The platform records the dog's ISO microchip number, the dog's name, breed and date of birth; the owner's name and contact details; the date of the final assessment; the trainer's ESTCA accreditation number; and the audit recording (§ D.5.1). The certification is then pushed automatically into the public ESTCA Register at **estca.eu**.

§ E.1.2

The Register shall generate a unique public certification number linked to the dog's passport. The owner shall receive a physical ESTCA certification card and a digital pass containing a QR code that resolves to the dog's public registry entry.



Certification lifecycle. Dashed branches show how a repeated failure routes back to re-enrolment after eight weeks, and how a reported safety incident moves a dog into Under review in the Register pending investigation.

E.2 The ESTCA Register

§ E.2.1

The ESTCA Register is a publicly accessible online database maintained by Stichting ESTCA. Any person or organisation may query the Register using a dog's pet passport number. The Register shall return: certification status (*Certified*, *Expired*, *Under Review*, *Suspended*, *Withdrawn*, or *Not Found*), the public certification number, the dog's registered name, the date of certification, the expiry date, and the name and accreditation number of the certifying trainer.

§ E.2.2

Owner personal data is not displayed in public queries. Airlines and transport operators requiring owner verification may use the QR code on the owner's digital pass; access to full details requires the owner's consent at the point of carriage.

E.3 Programmatic Verification (API)

§ E.3.1

Stichting ESTCA operates a verification API for airlines, ground handlers, and accredited trainers. The API allows real-time, programmatic confirmation of certification status at check-in, at the gate, or at any other operational checkpoint. Access requires registration and acceptance of the ESTCA data-use terms; keys are scoped — an airline-verify key cannot ingest data, and an ingest key cannot be used to enumerate the Register.

§ E.3.2

Two integration patterns are supported:

(a) Verification — a stateless lookup by passport number returning the same fields available in the public Register, suitable for inclusion in airline check-in flows. Rate-limited per key.

(b) Ingest — used by trainer organisations to write certifications back to the Register from their own training systems. Idempotent on a content-fingerprint key so that re-pushes apply corrections instead of being silently dropped.

§ E.3.3

The API is documented in Annex III. ESTCA publishes status pages, change-logs, and breaking-change notices at least 60 days in advance of any incompatible release.

E.4 Validity & Renewal

§ E.4.1

ESTCA certification is valid for two years from the date of the final assessment.

§ E.4.2

Renewal requires the dog to be re-assessed against the Annex I scorecard by any ESTCA-accredited trainer, with at least one new audit clip uploaded to certified-estca.eu. The same pass criteria and automatic fail conditions apply. The trainer may compose the renewal assessment as a discrete travel-simulation session or across normal sessions, on the same professional-judgement basis as the first assessment (§ D.5).

§ E.4.3

If a certification expires without renewal, the dog's status changes to *Expired*. The owner may re-certify by repeating the full assessment programme; there is no penalty period.

Part F — Quality Assurance, Complaints & Trainer Accountability

ESTCA's credibility depends on its ability to remove poor-quality trainers from the system. This Part describes the quality programme, complaints process, and the formal accountability ladder that applies when a trainer's certifications repeatedly produce dogs that misbehave in flight.

F.1 Routine Video Review

§ F.1.1

Stichting ESTCA shall review at least 10% of all audit recordings submitted to certified-estca.eu each quarter. Reviews are conducted by a member of the Technical Advisory Board or a designated quality reviewer. Recordings may also be sampled non-randomly when a complaint or incident report identifies a specific trainer, and ESTCA may at any time request additional footage from a trainer in connection with a review (§ D.5.1).

§ F.1.2

Where a review finds that a trainer has certified a dog that did not meet the standard, or that the audit footage is insufficient to evidence the standard, Stichting ESTCA shall notify the trainer in writing and open a case under § F.4. The case may close with no further action; with mandatory remediation; or by escalation up the accountability ladder.

F.2 Public Complaints

§ F.2.1

Any person — owner, fellow passenger, ground staff, or member of the public — may lodge a complaint regarding an ESTCA-certified dog or an ESTCA-accredited trainer by writing to **complaints@estca.eu**. Stichting ESTCA shall acknowledge receipt within ten working days and shall provide a substantive response within thirty working days.

F.3 Incidents Involving Certified Dogs

§ F.3.1

Where an ESTCA-certified dog is involved in a safety incident during air travel — biting, uncontrolled disturbance, escape from carrier or restraint, or refusal to settle resulting in operational impact — the certification shall be set to *Under Review* in the Register pending investigation.

§ F.3.2

Stichting ESTCA shall review the audit footage on file, request additional preparation or simulation footage from the certifying trainer where needed, consult with the trainer, and where available consider the airline's incident report. The investigation closes with one of the following outcomes: reinstatement (*Certified*), *Suspended* pending remediation, or *Withdrawn*.

F.4 Trainer Accountability Ladder

Where investigation establishes that a trainer's certification fell below the standard, Stichting ESTCA may apply one or more of the following measures, in escalating order:

Notice	Written record placed on the trainer's file. Future certifications by the same trainer are subject to mandatory audit review.
Mandatory review	Every audit recording from this trainer is reviewed by ESTCA before any subsequent certification takes effect, for a minimum period (typically six months).
Suspension	Accreditation paused. The trainer may not assess or certify any new dog. Existing certifications remain valid unless individually withdrawn.
Withdrawal	Accreditation cancelled. The trainer is removed from the public Register. Existing certifications by the trainer are reviewed individually; some may be set to <i>Under Review</i> or <i>Withdrawn</i> .
Ban	Reserved for serious or repeated misconduct. The trainer may not re-apply for ESTCA accreditation. The decision is published in the public Register.

A trainer subject to a measure under § F.4 has a right to written notice of the grounds, twenty working days to respond in writing, and an internal appeal to a panel of the Technical Advisory Board not previously involved in the case.

F.5 Reinstatement

§ F.5.1

A suspended trainer may apply for reinstatement on completion of any remediation specified, including, where appropriate, retaking the Train-the-Trainer module. A withdrawn trainer may apply for re-accreditation no earlier than 18 months after the date of withdrawal, and only where the original grounds did not include a ban under § F.4.

Part G — Airline Implementation Guidance

This Part is advisory. ESTCA certifies a dog's behavioural readiness for cabin travel. The operational arrangements that surround that travel — where the dog sits, how it is anchored, how many dogs travel per flight, what the cabin crew does with them, how spills or accidents are handled — are matters for the airline. Airlines that adopt ESTCA are encouraged to publish their own operational policy alongside it.

G.1 What ESTCA Certifies (and What It Doesn't)

§ G.1.1

An ESTCA certification is a statement that, on the date of the final assessment, the dog met the behavioural standard for cabin travel under the conditions tested. It is not:

- (a) A guarantee of behaviour on any specific flight.
- (b) A statement about the dog's suitability for any particular seat configuration.
- (c) A medical or veterinary clearance beyond the welfare baseline (Part B).
- (d) A waiver of the airline's right to refuse carriage.

G.2 Operational Practices Airlines Are Encouraged To Adopt

Airlines have, in practice, converged on a similar set of operational practices for in-cabin canine travel. The standard does not require any of the following, but airlines adopting ESTCA may wish to set out their own equivalents in their conditions of carriage:

- **Dedicated seat.** The owner purchases a dedicated seat for the dog adjacent to their own.
- **Window seat placement.** The dog seat is placed at the window, with the owner in the adjacent seat, to minimise contact with other passengers and aisle traffic.
- **Anchoring or carrier on seat.** The dog is either secured to the seat-frame anchoring point on a short lead with a mat in front of it, or carried in a ventilated carrier secured to the seat by an approved system.
- **Absorbent mat.** An absorbent travel mat is placed under the dog to manage any accidents.
- **Capacity per flight.** A maximum number of certified dogs per aircraft, distributed to maintain separation between travelling dogs (a few rows between any two dogs is typical practice).
- **In-flight muzzle policy.** The muzzle is applied during boarding, taxi, take-off and landing, and may be removed during cruise where the dog remains settled.
- **Crew welfare check.** A discreet check on each dog at fixed points during the flight.
- **Adjacent-passenger consent.** Allergic or otherwise sensitive passengers may request to be reseated.
- **Refusal at the gate.** The cabin-crew or gate agent retains the right to refuse a specific dog if the animal presents in obvious distress, sickness or aggression on the day, regardless of certification.

The standard's view is that an ESTCA-certified dog plus a clearly published airline policy is, in combination, what makes travel safe. Either alone is insufficient.

G.3 Size, Weight & Breed Considerations

§ G.3.1

ESTCA does not impose a fixed weight limit. A 12-kg dog can be unfit for cabin travel and a 30-kg dog can be entirely suitable; the certification is based on behaviour, not on the scale. Airlines may set their own weight, size or breed restrictions and ESTCA defers to those entirely.

§ G.3.2

The standard does, however, acknowledge a practical reality: very large or very heavy breeds may simply not fit safely in a single floor space adjacent to a seat. Trainers are expected to apply the welfare-trumps duty under § B.7 and decline assessment where, in their professional judgement, the physical proportions of the dog are inconsistent with cabin travel under any reasonable airline configuration. Airlines, in turn, are encouraged to publish a clear maximum size for their cabin programme rather than assess this case-by-case at the gate.

§ G.3.3

Brachycephalic breeds (Annex II) require veterinary clearance under § B.5 regardless of size. This is a welfare requirement, not a behavioural one.

G.4 Liability & Insurance

§ G.4.1

By default, liability for any damage or injury caused by a dog rests with the dog's owner. ESTCA accredits trainers but does not act as an insurer; trainers are encouraged to hold professional indemnity but their cover does not run to the airline or to other passengers. Airlines wishing to allocate liability differently may do so through their conditions of carriage.

§ G.4.2

Airlines are encouraged to require, as a condition of carriage, that the owner holds appropriate third-party liability cover for the dog. This is a familiar mechanism and places the financial risk where the legal responsibility already lies.

G.5 The Case for Mandatory Adoption

Airlines that accept dogs in the cabin without an objective behavioural standard are, in effect, relying on the owner's self-assessment. That is an unusual posture in aviation. Mandatory adoption of ESTCA replaces self-assessment with an independent professional judgement, made by someone who has met the dog and watched it work, against a published standard that they will lose their accreditation for ignoring.

For owners, mandatory adoption is also a benefit, not a barrier. A dog that should not fly is far better stopped during preparation by a trainer who can advise, than at the gate by ground staff who cannot. ESTCA is designed to make refusal a routine, professional decision early in the journey rather than an adversarial one at the airport.

ESTCA accordingly recommends that airlines operating in-cabin canine programmes treat ESTCA certification as a mandatory pre-condition of booking, communicated as such on the booking surface and verified at check-in via the API in § E.3.

Annex I — Final Assessment Scorecard

This scorecard is completed by the assessing ESTCA-accredited trainer on the basis of observation across the preparation work (§ D.5). The trainer marks each element when it has been *reliably observed* — not in a one-off best-case attempt, but consistently enough that the trainer is willing to put their accreditation behind it. All elements must receive *Meets Standard* for the dog to be certified.

Area	Element	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet
Area 1 — Foundation	Reliable sit, down, stay (30 s) and recall		
Area 1 — Foundation	No aggressive response toward trainer or unfamiliar persons		
Area 2 — Settled	Settles within 5 minutes in confined space		
Area 2 — Settled	Remains calm for 20 continuous minutes		
Area 2 — Settled	No persistent vocalisation when settled		
Area 3 — Environmental	Walks loose-lead in busy, unfamiliar environment		
Area 3 — Environmental	Calm response to sudden loud noise		
Area 3 — Environmental	No reactive behaviour to passing people or rolling luggage		
Area 4 — Equipment & handler	Tolerates muzzle or head collar without persistent pawing		
Area 4 — Equipment & handler	Accepts handling by unfamiliar person		
Area 4 — Equipment & handler	Remains settled during a brief owner absence		
Area 5 — Integrated readiness	Holistic professional judgement: dog is travel-ready		
	OVERALL RESULT		

Trainer name: _____ Accreditation no.: _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Dog name: _____ Passport no.: _____

Microchip no.: _____

Annex II — Brachycephalic Breed Advisory List

Dogs of the following breeds, or crosses thereof, are not, by default, certified under this standard (see § B.5). Cabin pressure combined with the upper-airway anatomy characteristic of these breeds presents a welfare risk that ESTCA does not underwrite. An airline may, on its own veterinary, operational and risk grounds, choose to accept such a dog on a specific route notwithstanding; in that case the trainer shall enrol only on prior written confirmation from the carrier of record and a current veterinary clearance dated within 30 days of enrolment. This list is non-exhaustive and may be updated by the ESTCA Technical Advisory Board.

Breed	Anatomical risk	ESTCA position
Pug (Mops)	High	Not certified by default; airline discretion only
English Bulldog	High	Not certified by default; airline discretion only
French Bulldog	High	Not certified by default; airline discretion only
Boston Terrier	High	Not certified by default; airline discretion only
Pekingese	High	Not certified by default; airline discretion only
Shih Tzu	Moderate	Not certified by default; airline discretion only
Cavalier King Charles Spaniel	Moderate	Not certified by default; airline discretion only
Boxer	Moderate	Not certified by default; airline discretion only
Dogue de Bordeaux	Moderate	Not certified by default; airline discretion only
Bullmastiff	Moderate	Not certified by default; airline discretion only

Annex III — Verification API Reference

The ESTCA verification API is documented in full at estca.eu/api. This Annex sets out the externally guaranteed surface — endpoints, identifiers and outcomes — so that airlines and integrators can scope a programme of work and review their own pet-travel flow against the registry without leaving the standard.

Authentication

All requests carry an **X-Ingest-API-Key** or **X-Verify-API-Key** header issued by Stichting ESTCA. Keys are scoped: a verify key cannot ingest data, an ingest key cannot enumerate the Register. Keys are rotated on request and revoked immediately on suspected compromise.

Endpoints

Path	Used by	Purpose
GET /api/v1/verify	Airlines, gate agents, partners	Public lookup by passport number; returns certification status and headline metadata only. Rate-limited per key.
POST /api/v1/ingest/certifications/upsert	certified-estca.eu	Create or update a certification record for a dog. Idempotent on a content fingerprint key.
POST /api/v1/ingest/certifications/status	certified-estca.eu	Status-only update (e.g. expired, withdrawn) without re-sending the full record.
POST /api/v1/ingest/trainers/upsert	certified-estca.eu	Sync a trainer's registered name and active status.

Today, the only ingest source recognised by Stichting ESTCA is **certified-estca.eu**. Verification (read) keys are issued to airlines and ground handlers on application.

Status values

Value	Meaning
Certified	The dog has a current, valid ESTCA certification.
Expired	The certification has lapsed; renewal required.
Under Review	Certification temporarily paused pending an open investigation.
Suspended	Certification paused by ESTCA action; not valid for travel.
Withdrawn	Certification cancelled; not valid for travel.
Not Found	No certification exists in the Register for the supplied identifier.

Airlines should treat any value other than **Certified** as a non-pass for the purpose of carriage decisions, and route the case to their own boarding-refusal procedure.

Annex IV — Trainer Accountability Ladder

This Annex restates the accountability measures of § F.4 in tabular form. It is referenced in the Train-the-Trainer module and forms part of the Code of Conduct each accredited trainer agrees to on accreditation and re-accreditation.

Step	Measure	Trigger (typical)	Effect on existing certifications
1	Notice	Single quality review failure or minor procedural breach.	No effect on existing certifications; future assessments subject to mandatory audit review.
2	Mandatory review	Repeat notice, or first material concern about assessment quality.	No effect; the trainer's subsequent assessments are individually reviewed.
3	Suspension	Material concern unresolved by remediation, or single serious incident.	No automatic effect; existing certifications remain unless individually reviewed.
4	Withdrawal	Pattern of failed reviews, or repeated incidents traceable to the trainer.	Each existing certification individually reviewed; some moved to Under Review or Withdrawn.
5	Ban	Serious misconduct, falsified records, or repeated wilful breaches of the Code of Conduct.	All existing certifications by the trainer reviewed; trainer permanently delisted.

— End of ESTCA Standard v1.1 —

*This standard is maintained by Stichting ESTCA, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
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