

Living with a Blind Dog

When blindness strikes a pet, it can be quite sudden or it can slowly develop over time. If you think your dog has gone blind or is going blind, a trip to the veterinarian is in order as soon as possible. Blindness can be caused by a variety of medical problems, not just those affecting the eye itself. Diabetes in dogs can cause sudden blindness, as can cataracts or glaucoma. Diabetes is potentially life-threatening, so it's important to make an appointment with your vet right away. Also, a quick diagnosis and treatment can sometimes restore the animal's sight.



If the medical conditions have been dealt with and your pet has been determined to be permanently blind, you need to be aware that blind pets need time to adjust to their new limitations. Here are some guidelines:

- Do not approach and handle your pet without first announcing your approach. Gently say his name before trying to touch him, so he knows who you are.
- Blind pets may not like to be picked up. They lose their orientation and may become frightened. Pet and play with them on the floor, where they feel more secure.
- Limit changes in furniture arrangement and routines as much as possible. Place food and water bowls in familiar places that are easy to locate.
- If your pet has recently become blind, carefully monitor her food and water intake until you are sure she is able to manage on her own.

Despite these few limitations, life for blind pets can be quite enjoyable. Since dogs have such a keen sense of smell, walks can be just as much fun as they were before the onset of blindness. For safety, of course, it's a good idea to keep your dog on a leash when you're out walking and watch for obstacles in her path. If your dog is a ball or toy lover, he can still locate these things with his sense of smell. Again, make sure there aren't any dangerous obstacles in the way when you play with your dog.

The website www.blinddogs.com contains suggestions for toys and games for blind dogs, as well as other resources to help you enhance your dog's quality of life.