



THE PROVEN LEADER IN PET MOBILITY



UNDERSTANDING VISION LOSS IN PETS



WALKIN' PETS by HandicappedPets.com has been an incredible 20-year journey for all of us. We began with the mission to show the pet-care professional community that a mobility problem doesn't necessarily need to be an end-of-life crisis. Since then, we've helped over a million dogs, cats, rabbits, ducks, chickens, and other pet family members live happy, healthy lives. What a privilege that has been!

We've accomplished that and now have the support of veterinarians, animal rehab therapists, and pet care professionals around the world. Pet care-takers are no longer routinely advised to put their animals to sleep simply because they can't walk well.

Now, our mission is education. Sometimes I tell someone about my company and they say "I had no idea these devices existed. I wish I had known about you when my best friend was sick." That's my cue that I need to do a better job spreading our message that "our pets are family, and aging, injured, and disabled pets deserve to live happy, healthy lives."

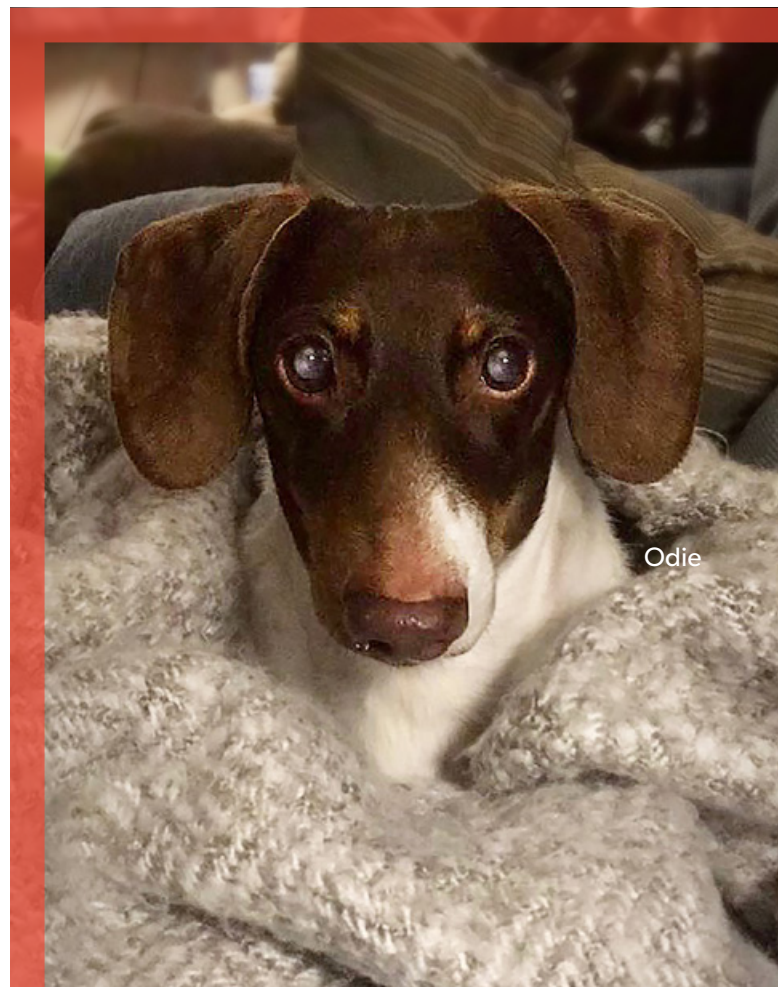
I'm Mark C. Robinson, CEO and founder of Walkin' Pets, and inventor of the Walkin' Wheels dog wheelchair. I want to thank Jennifer Pratt for creating this brilliantly crafted booklet and Dan Rodd for his creative work on the graphics and design. But mostly, I want to thank you for doing your part to make life better for the animals we love.

Warmly,

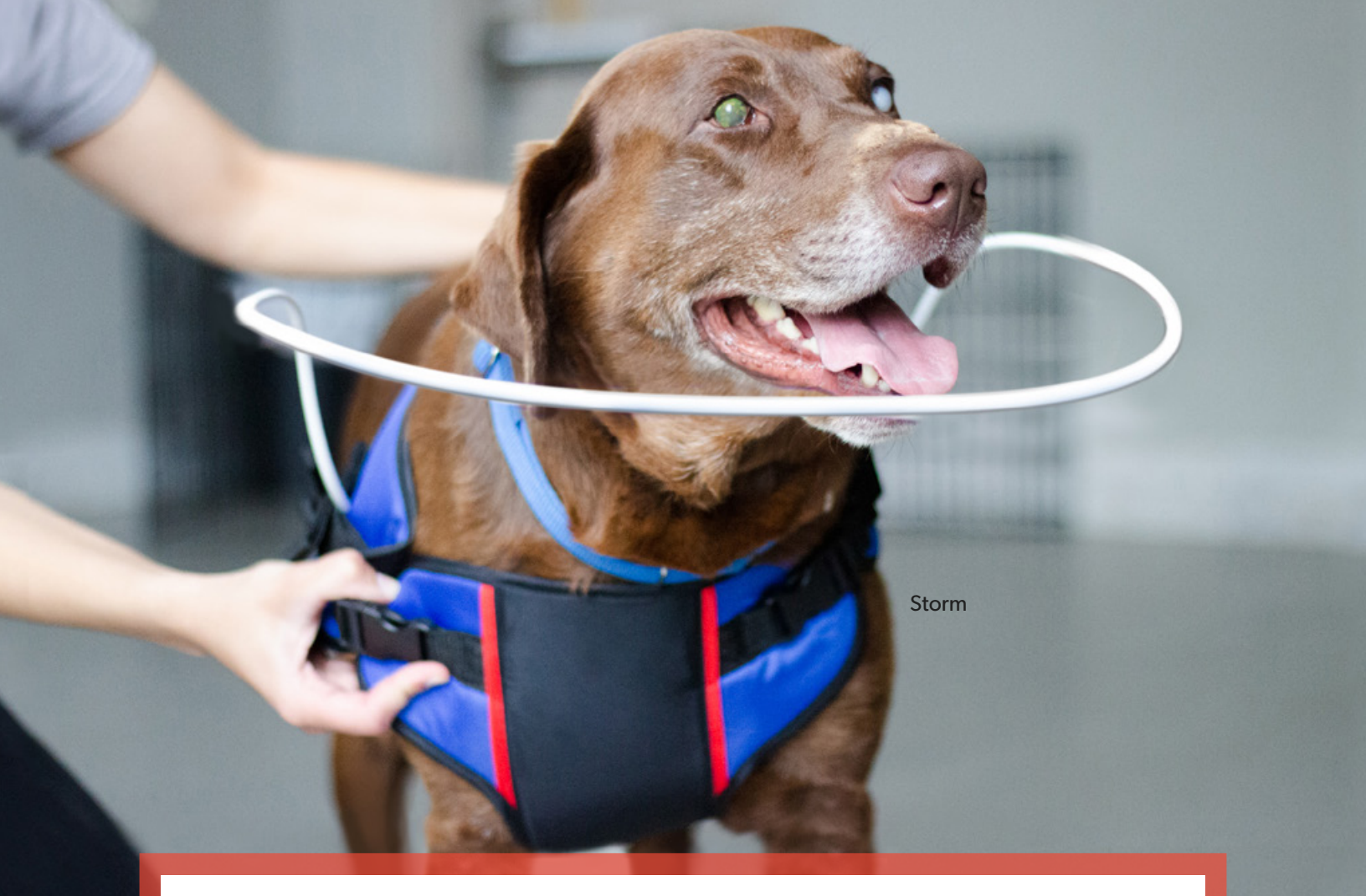
Mark

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Storm

HELP YOUR PET ADAPT TO SUDDEN BLINDNESS

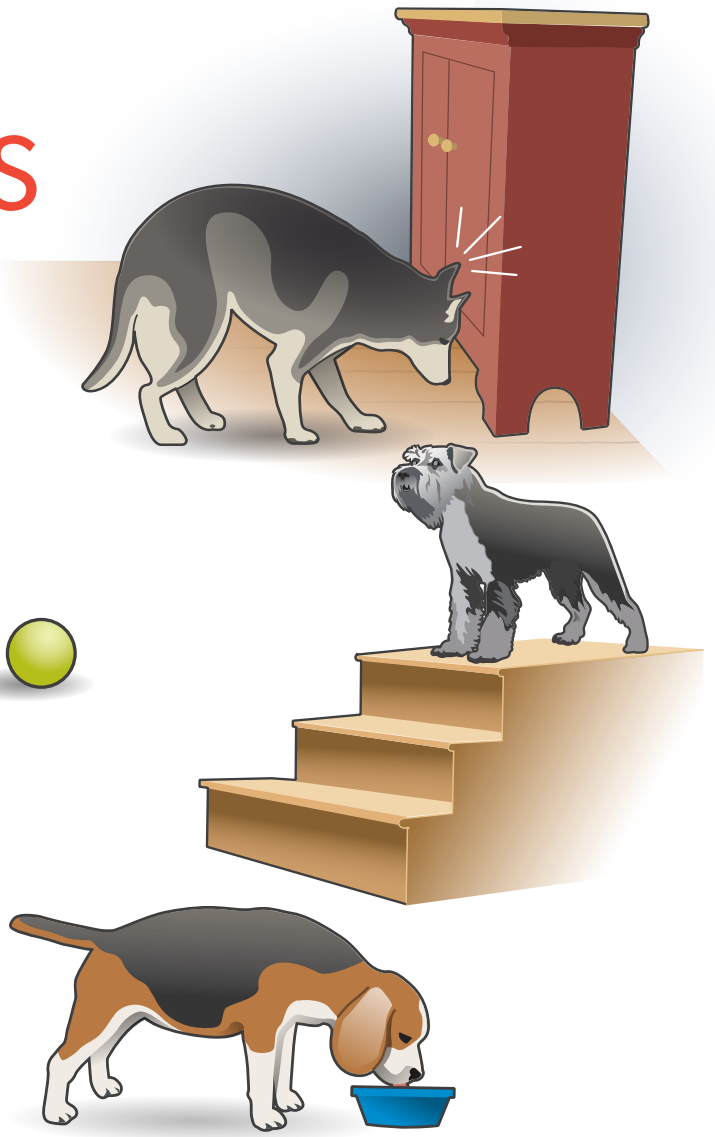
Changes in vision are common as pets age, most of the time the changes in eyesight gradually deteriorate allowing you and your pet to adjust to their new way of life. However, acute blindness in dogs can be devastating. Sudden and complete vision loss can be anxiety inducing for everyone.

SIGNS OF PET BLINDNESS

Any noticeable changes in your pet's vision should be brought to your Vet's attention immediately, here are a few things to look out for:

- Bumping into walls or furniture
- Hesitancy to jump off the bed or go down the stairs
- Not responding when you throw a toy
- Becoming startled by bright light (most common in pets with cataracts)
- Excessive thirst (diabetes and SARDS)
- Cloudy eyes

Vision loss in cats can have very similar signs, however, cat owners may also notice increased vocalization, disorientation and widely dilated pupils.



Charley

Odie

TESTING YOUR DOG'S EYESIGHT

Cotton Ball Test

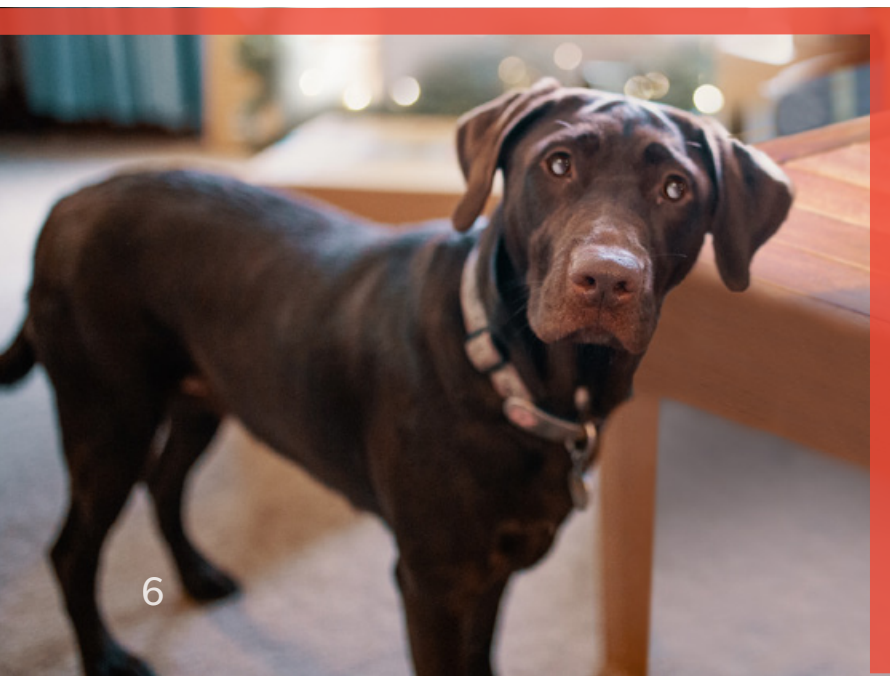
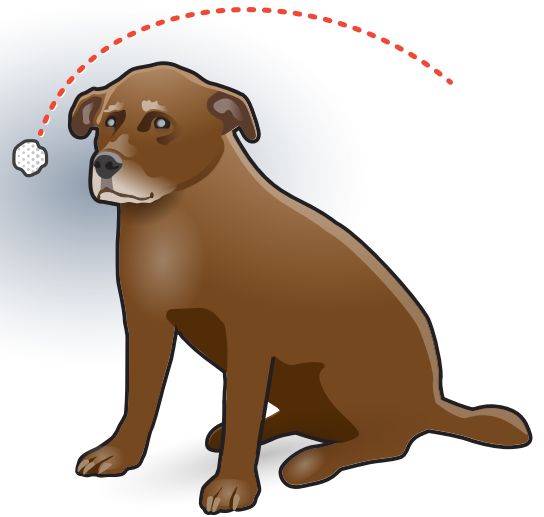
While in your dog's normal range of vision, move a small cotton ball, or other small scentless item, and see if they react. Do they track it with their eyes? Toss it lightly and see if they respond to it.

Placement Test

Pick up your pet and allow their feet to dangle. Slowly lower them toward a table or other elevated surface. Watch their reaction; Do they raise their leg to step up and help you? Or do they bump their legs on the table's edge?

Navigating Indoor Obstacles

Dogs are creatures of habit and rely on all their senses to move around the house. Bumping into walls or furniture is a good indication of vision loss. Since dogs rely heavily on sense of smell, existing furniture may smell familiar enough for them to step around (even if they cannot see it). For a vision test, place new obstacles in unexpected places, and observe to see how they get around the space. If they bump into or trip over the obstacle, it's time to see your vet.

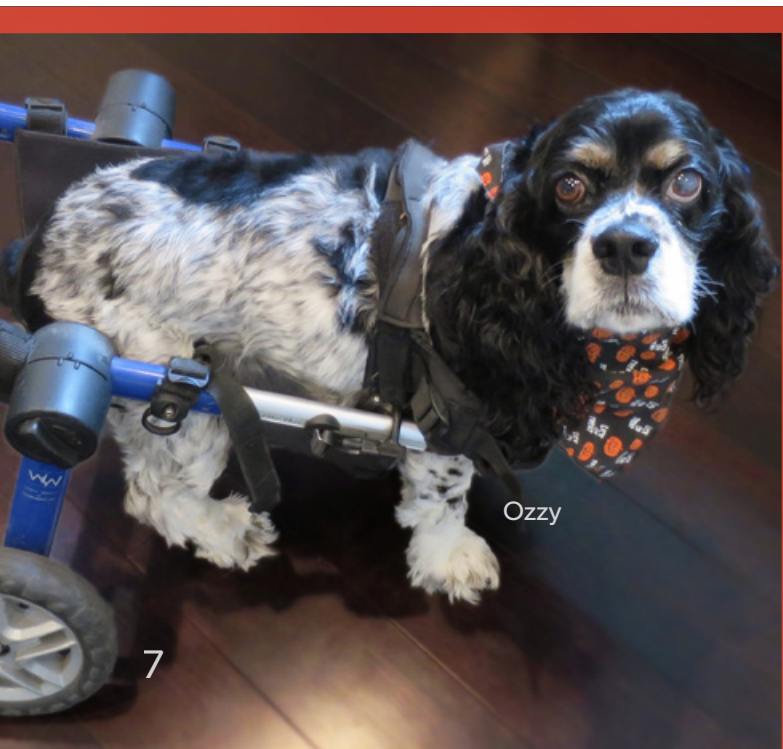


Tip: Remember this should only be done as a test. Rearranging furniture, or moving familiar objects can be extremely dangerous for a blind pet.

CAUSES OF SUDDEN VISION LOSS

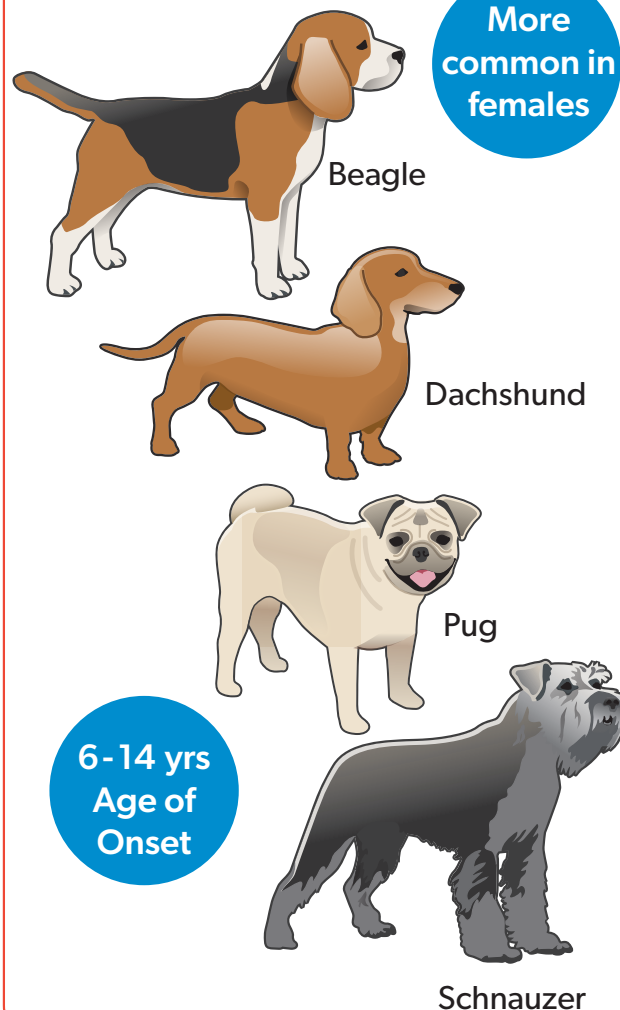
SUDDEN ACQUIRED RETINAL DEGENERATION (SARDS)

SARDS is a degenerative eye condition that causes an otherwise healthy dog to become suddenly blind. SARDS is one of the most common causes of vision loss in pets. The condition is more prevalent in female dogs, and the typical onset is between the ages of 6 to 14 years. From start to finish, vision loss from SARDS typically occurs quickly over a period of 24 hours to a month.



What Breeds Get SARDS?

Breeds Commonly Affected:



More common in females

6-14 yrs
Age of
Onset

SARDS is also seen in Brittany Spaniels, Maltese breeds, and although less common, other purebred and mixed breeds.

SARDS *Continued*

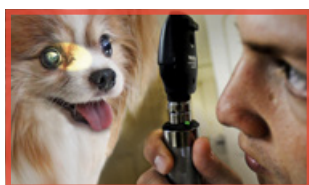
Symptoms of SARDS

Although sudden blindness is the most obvious indicator of the disease, dogs may also experience:

- Infrequent blinking or mild eye redness



- Dilated pupils with little or no response to light



- Increased thirst and urination



- Increased appetite



- Sudden weight gain

These symptoms and behavioral changes can be indicators of SARDS, as well as other conditions. It's vital that you pay attention to any change in your dog's behavior or vision. Pets that exhibit one or more of these symptoms, should immediately be assessed by a veterinarian. Your vet will work to create a proper treatment plan and diagnosis. Pets with vision loss may even be referred to a veterinary ophthalmologist or other specialist to receive further treatment and testing.

Can SARDS Be Treated?

Sadly, there is no scientifically proven treatment for SARDS and most dogs are irreversibly blind. The good news is that the condition is not painful and dogs living with the condition go on to live long, happy lives. Unlike other conditions that affect sight, most dogs with the condition are unlikely to experience any other internal problems. Although your dog's vision loss is likely irreversible, some pets have seen some improvement in visual cues.

Acute blindness can be an adjustment for both pets and pet parents, but luckily sight is not a dog's dominant sense. With adjustment your dog will begin to rely more heavily on their senses, usually their sense of smell. As a pet parent, there are many things that you can do to help your pet adjust to living without vision.



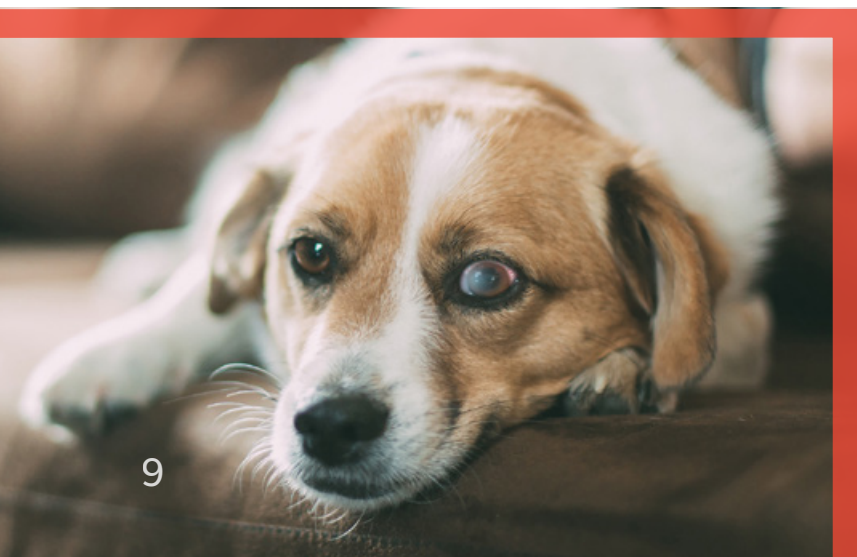
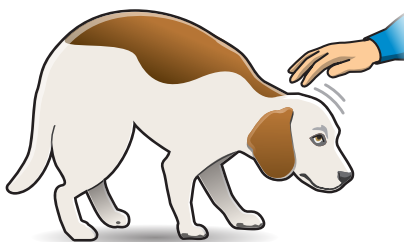
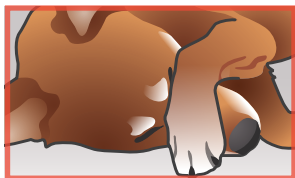
GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma is one of the most common causes of blindness in dogs and generally occurs in one eye first. This condition causes a painful build-up of pressure in the eye which damages and kills the retinal cells. Pet parents will usually see signs of pain, swelling and squinting in their dog. If treated quickly by a Vet, they may be able to save the pet's eyesight by relieving eye pressure.

40% of dogs with glaucoma will be blind in the affected eye within the first year. Glaucoma doesn't occur evenly in both eyes, and it can be years before the second eye is affected by the condition. Most glaucoma diagnoses occurs between the ages of 3-7 years old.

Signs and Symptoms of Glaucoma

- Eye pain
- Frequent eye rubbing
- Avoiding having their head pet
- Swollen or bulging eye
- Eye redness
- Cloudy or bluish retina



Although a dog's glaucoma symptoms may appear to happen overnight, it's more likely a dog has had glaucoma for longer than you realized. Complete vision loss occurs in later stages of the condition, once the damage has reached the optic nerve.

Treating Glaucoma

Although there is no known cure for canine glaucoma, there are ways to treat it and medically manage the condition.

Medication

Depending on the severity of the condition, it is possible to treat glaucoma with medication. Topical ointments help to lessen pain and discomfort, and relieve painful eye pressure. Topical treatments may have to be administered multiple times a day. Oral and injectable medications are available as well. Injections are ideal for lowering eye pressure quickly, but can only be done by a vet while a dog is hospitalized.

Surgical Treatment

In many cases, surgery is the only option to eliminate the eye pressure and the pain it causes. This is especially true if the glaucoma has advanced undetected and the optical nerve has been damaged. A common surgical option involves removing the eye and sewing the eyelid shut. Some pet parents may choose to use a prosthetic eye instead, although less common. Other possible eye surgeries may include shunt placement to drain fluid and even laser therapy.



Charley

RETINAL DETACHMENT

Sudden retinal detachment is the leading cause of blindness in cats. Detachment can be caused by trauma but is most often due to a pet's high blood pressure. If a pet's blood pressure can be controlled by medication and normalized quickly, partial reattachment may be possible.

PROGRESSIVE RETINAL ATROPHY (PRA)

PRA is an inherited condition where cells in the retina deteriorate causing blindness. Although not painful, it does affect both eyes. This is a degenerative condition with no cure, although with medication you may be able to slow down the process.

CATARACTS IN DOGS

When you think of a blind dog, you most likely envision a pet with cloudy eyes. That cloudiness and haze across the eyes are usually caused by cataracts. A dog's cataracts develop when the lens of the eye clouds, usually due to the water balance in the lens or a change in protein. As the lens clouds over, it blocks light from reaching a dog's retina causing blindness. Cataracts can develop seemingly overnight or very slowly, depending on the cause, and can form in one or both eyes.

CATARACT SYMPTOMS

- A bluish, gray, or white haze covering the eye
- Sudden clumsiness and bumping into obstacles
- Walking with nose to the ground
- Apparent eye irritation or eye discharge
- Increased blinking, rubbing, or scratching eyes

Do Cloudy Eyes Always Mean My Pet has Cataracts?

Not always. Cloudy eyes can also be caused by a condition called Nuclear Sclerosis. Pets with Nuclear Sclerosis experience a compression of the lens, and as newer components of the eye reform, there is a hardening of the lens itself.



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This condition tends to affect both eyes at the same time, but light can still pass through the eye, so the pet can still see. Both cataracts and Nuclear Sclerosis look very similar, and a pet would need to be seen by a veterinarian or a veterinary eye specialist to determine the cause of their cloudy eyes.

CAUSES OF CATARACTS

Inherited Condition

In most cases, cataracts are hereditary. Over one hundred different dog breeds are at risk for hereditary cataracts. Some breeds prone to developing cataracts, are Cocker Spaniels, Labrador Retrievers, Poodles, Huskies, French Bulldogs, and Boston Terriers. Many breeders will test their dogs to ensure that the puppies they produce will not be at risk for the condition.

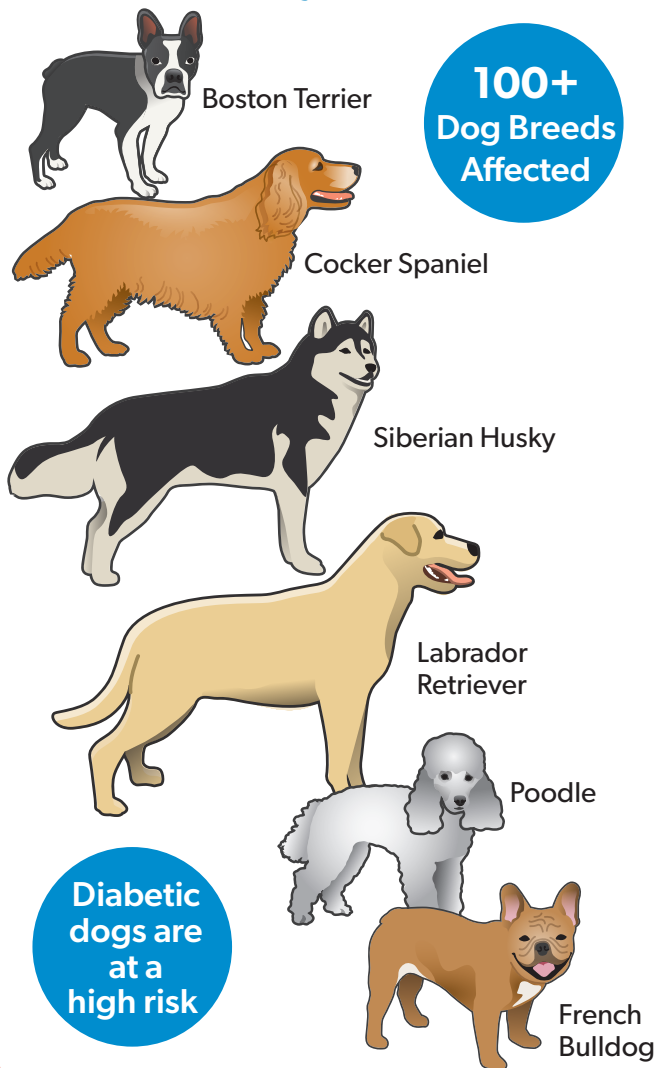


Age-Related

As dogs get older, vision problems and cataracts can naturally develop. Dogs at risk for other age-related diseases may be at a higher risk of cataract development.

What Breeds get Cataracts?

Breeds Commonly Affected:



Diabetes

Just like human beings, there is no cure for canine diabetes. If not treated correctly, the symptoms and effects of diabetes can easily progress. If left untreated, diabetes can also result in cataracts, loss of vision, or even death. Once your dog has been diagnosed with diabetes, it's imperative, therefore, for you to have the right treatment for your dog.

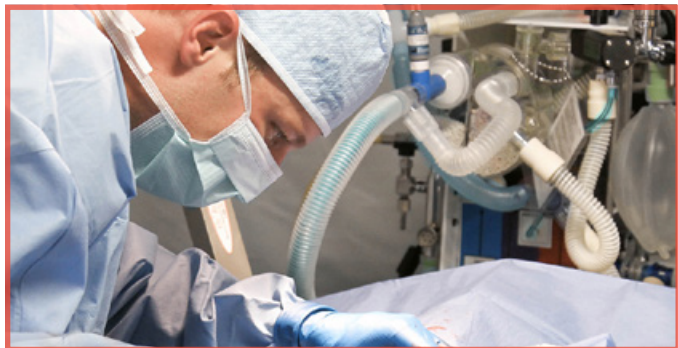
Even a dog whose diabetes are medically managed and under control, cataract development is almost unavoidable. Most diabetic dogs develop cataracts within 5-6 months of diagnosis. Diabetic cataracts develop very quickly with complete vision loss in less than 48 hours. Cataract surgery is possible if the eye is otherwise healthy and vision loss may be restored.

High blood sugar levels change the balance of water in the lens – diabetic cataracts are the fastest growing form of the condition. Once they begin to form, diabetic dogs will typically lose their sight within a 48-hour period.

TREATING AND CARING FOR A PET WITH CATARACTS

Surgical Removal

Surgery is a highly effective option for pets. During cataract surgery, the cloudy lens is removed to restore sight. Diabetic pets must have their diabetes regulated before undergoing any surgical treatment.

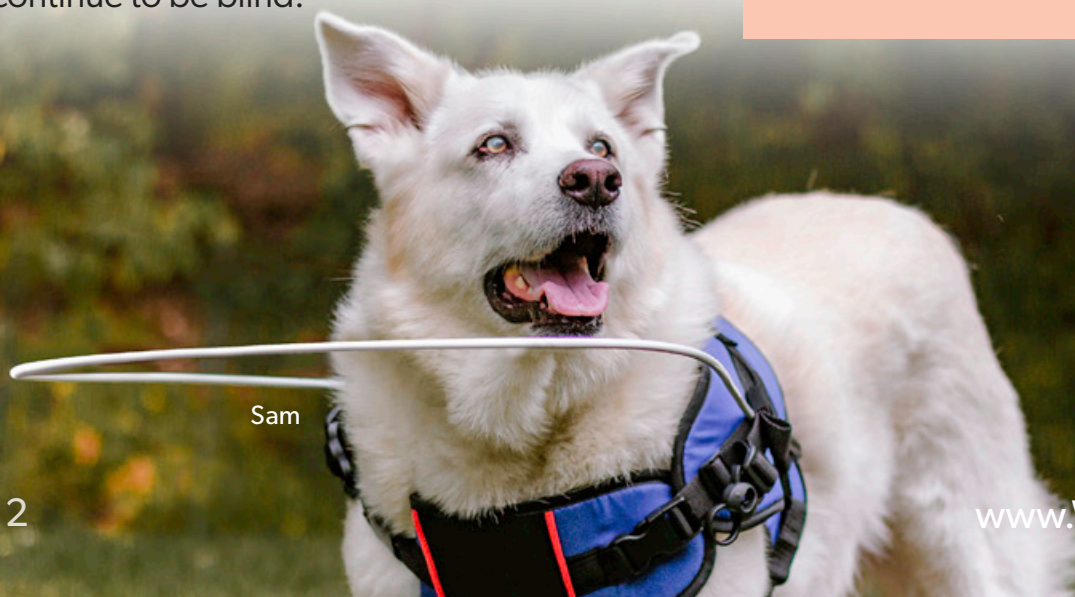


Although, surgery is not an option for every dog. Leaving your pet's cataract untreated can be dangerous. Cataracts can detach from the tissue strands holding it in place to damage a pet's eye or settle in such a way as to block the eye's natural fluid drainage causing a buildup of pressure. This painful pressure buildup is also known as glaucoma, and can mean permanent blindness. If after being examined your vet determines that there is no sign of glaucoma or inflammation, surgery may not be necessary. However, your pet will continue to be blind.



Assistive Devices for Blind Pets

A blind pet can live a long and healthy life. Dogs rely more on their heightened sense of smell than they do their vision. A **Blind Dog Halo** can help your pet to ease into life without sight. While wearing the Halo, a pet is easily able to navigate the world around them. The Halo works similarly to a cane for a human, warning them of the nearby dangers and obstacles and encouraging them to move safely around them. The Halo keeps your blind pet safe, while building up their confidence.

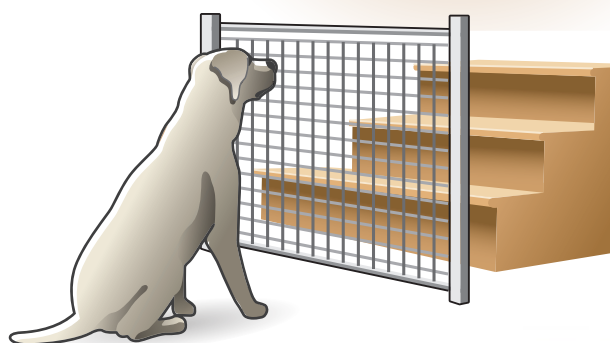


Sam

HOW TO HELP A BLIND PET FEEL SAFER AT HOME

The good news is that blind pets can live a long, happy, and otherwise healthy life. Here are a few simple ways you can help your pets adjust to life without sight:

- Avoid rearranging furniture or moving familiar objects
- Introduce them to a Blind Dog Halo – this will allow them to safely get around on their own. The Halo will bump into objects before they do, which helps your pet to build up their confidence
- Keep them in a safe space while they adjust, and gate off stairs and other areas that may be too dangerous for them to navigate on their own
- Turn on lights when you enter a room or make a noise to avoid startling them
- Touch your pet frequently to let them know you're nearby
- Walk them around the house and re-familiarize them with where things are located (especially food, water, favorite toys, and their bed)
- When walking outside, always walk your pet on a leash for their own safety



Sterling

6 WAYS TO HELP YOUR BLIND DOG ADAPT

Helping your newly blind or visually impaired dog adjust to their new way of life can be a challenge. It's hard to watch your dog struggle as they try to move in what was once familiar territory. As a pet owner, you feel lost as you watch your dog adjust, struggling to understand what's happening to them.

Here are a few simple ways to help them adapt and feel safer:

1. Communicating with a Blind Dog

Dogs that have previously learned hand signals will now need to learn to follow verbal and touch commands. Even a light touch and talking to your dog may be enough to let them know you're near. If you have other pets in the house, consider attaching a bell to their collars, so that your vision-impaired pet can still play and interact with them.

Your voice can have a calming effect on your dog. When your dog becomes confused or disoriented, speak soothingly to your dog. Let them know you are near and able to help them if they need it. Use your voice to guide them.

2. Stick to Your Routine

As your dog adjusts to their new blindness, stick to their daily routine. If you always start your day with a walk around the neighborhood, keep doing it! These activities are familiar to your dog and will help give them a sense of normalcy.

Other senses will become heightened. Use this to keep them stimulated and help them adjust to a life without vision. Think about the different flooring textures in your house. The change from carpet, to tile or hardwood may help your blind pet navigate your home and differentiate between the different rooms.



3. Don't Move Familiar Objects

Your pet has a great memory. By keeping their food bowl in the same place it will be easier for them to find it when they're hungry. Some blind pet owners will switch their dog's standard water bowl out for a fountain-style bowl that sounds like running water. Keep their favorite toys where they are, and try not to move your furniture!

Walk your dog around the house, helping them to navigate the house safely. If you have a smaller dog, carrying your dog around and placing them in a new part of the house can be very disorienting. Let them discover their surroundings slowly and keep their favorite objects in familiar places.

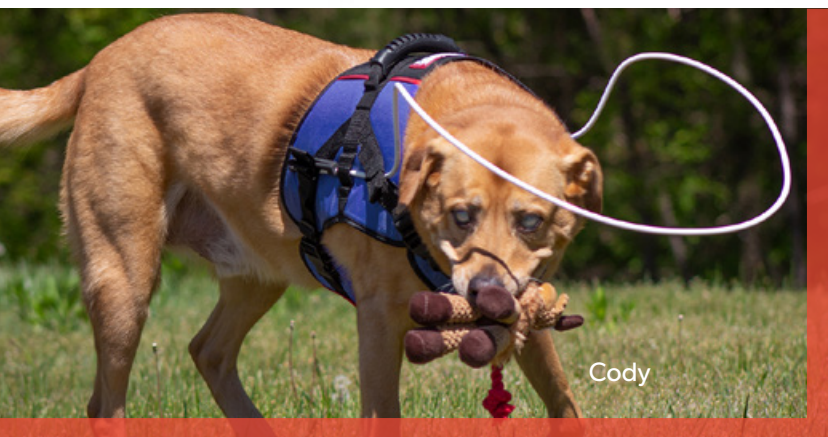
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6 WAYS TO HELP YOUR BLIND DOG ADAPT

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4. Continue to Play

Pets who lose their vision can become depressed and feel isolated. Keeping them active and engaged will prevent depression and ease the adjustment into a life without sight. Think about the toys they use. Select toys with sound, squeaky toys, bells, and other toys that make noise. Also, scent can help make playtime more fun. Select dog toys that can be filled with treats or rub scents or smelly treats on toys will make them easier to find.



5. Safety First

Check your surroundings. Before giving them access to a new space, get down on their level and look for potential dangers. Are there sharp corners they could bump into? Is the floor clean or is there anything that could cause them to trip?

While your dog adjusts it may be best to keep them in a part of the house, they find comforting. An area free of hazards is best. Use a pet gate to section off stairways or other parts of the house until your dog can master the entire house. Slowly open them to new parts of the house as they increase their confidence. When you're not at home, consider crating your dog to give them a sense of security.



6. Use a Blind Dog Halo

Getting around is going to be difficult for your dog. As a pet's vision changes, so does their confidence. Adjusting to vision loss can be a struggle. Mapping their surrounds is a daily challenge that can lead a pet to feeling confused and lost in their own home. A Blind Dog Halo helps pets to safely navigate the space around them. Instead of bumping into the wall and tripping into furniture, the Halo will provide a barrier between your dog and the object, alerting them to the nearby obstacle. Helping them to safely guide your pet around the house. More than anything, the Blind Dog Halo gives blind dogs and cats the confidence they need to move around safely.

There are many ways that you can help your best friend adjust to their new circumstances, but the most important is to be patient. With a little time and effort, your dog can live a full and happy life.

LIVING BY NEW RULES: CARING FOR A BLIND CAT

Living with disabilities can be challenging and demanding. Just like humans, cats can be born blind or may develop blindness at some point in their lives. Vision loss can be frustrating, but cats, as independent animals, with a little adjustment, can continue to lead a fulfilling and happy life. All they need is a bit of love and support from your side.



Unlike dogs, which are primarily focused on their sense of smell, cats rely on all three senses equally. Although cats are known for their excellent eyesight, feline vision loss is not uncommon. Blindness most commonly occurs in older cats and is a consequence of the onset of aging cataracts. Kittens can be born blind, but more often, cats experience gradual loss of vision. The most common causes are diseases such as diabetes, glaucoma, tumors, or physical trauma. Even losing sight in only one eye can have a devastating impact on a cat.

In cases of feline blindness, the loss of night vision or vision in low light conditions are one of the first symptoms. In cats that develop blindness, it is not uncommon for declines to occur when jumping on home furniture. You may notice that their irises do not respond when a strong light source is drawn into them.

To help you overcome this stressful situation, take a look at some tips below:

1. Give Them Time to Adjust

Cats are very independent animals so, you will require patience as you support them. With time, they will adapt to their new lifestyle. If vision loss is gradual, the transition is much easier for any cat, and by the time your cat completely loses their eyesight, they will easily navigate in their environment. However, if vision loss occurs suddenly, much more time will be needed for adaptation. If this is the situation, try to stay calm and cool – because pet handicaps can be overwhelming for the owners even more than for their pets.

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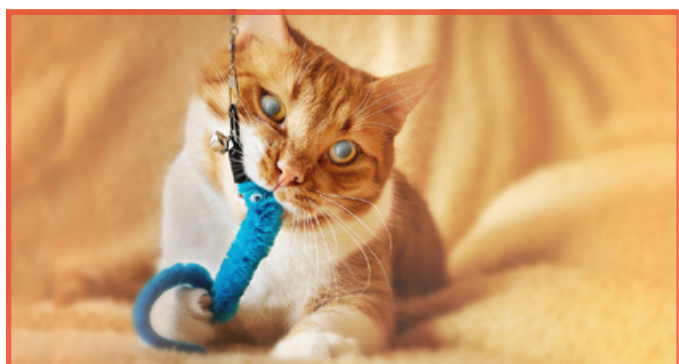
CARING FOR A BLIND CAT

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2. Let them Make New Mental Maps

Be sure not to change your home significantly, as any new furniture can be a source of danger to your pet, especially if your cat tends to jump or climb. The blind cat will need to create a new, internal “map” of its environment. Getting to know parts of the home in a completely different way than when their eyesight functioned normally. It is best to designate their toilet or litter box as a reference point. Bring your cat to the litter box and then let them explore the house from there. It will help that your cat can always find the toilet wherever they are. Make this a part of your daily morning routine.

For starters, you can place the litter box in a smaller room. As the cat learns how to safely move in that room, you can let open new rooms in other parts of the house for them to map out. Placing small pieces of their favorite treats along the path that will take them to the food bowl, is also one of the options that will make it easier for them to learn different rooms.



3. Keep Your Cat Engaged

Playtime is especially important for blind cats, who enjoy it just as much as any other cat. There can be found plenty of noisy toys, like balls containing bells that stimulate their hearing and smell senses. Also, remember to block access to potentially hazardous items and parts of the apartment like stairs, toilet, curtains, patio, etc. Take care of them, and they will take care of you, too.

4. Say Hello and Cuddle

Blind cats startle easily and can be especially sensitive to sudden sounds. Sounds such as unlocking and opening doors can be especially jarring because the sounds are unexpected.

Greet your cat every time you enter the house or room and gently touch them on the back or neck, letting them know it's you and not to be scared. Some cats may still see light. In that case, turning on a light when you come into the room can help as well.

5. Talk, Talk, Talk...

We all love attention and nice words, and blind cats – especially. Make sure you talk to them as much as possible so that the color of your voice adds security and helps them create a new mental map of space. Also, when away from home, leave your TV or radio on – the sounds they emit will help them better orient themselves in the home.



BE MOVING



BE HAPPY



BE AMAZED



BE TOGETHER



BE THE NEXT MIRACLE



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