



# LOOKING AFTER + LIVING WITH A BLIND DOG

Firstly, we want to reassure you - blind dogs cope very well and can have a very good quality of life! Be ready to be inspired by how well your blind dog will cope, rather than being sad and full of pity.

Dogs are amazing the way they adapt – don't forget that their sense of smell and hearing are far better than ours! A human nose has about 6 million receptors for smell – a dog's nose has about 300 million - that is 50 times more! Dogs can hear things about four times further away than we can – they can be outside in the garden and hear you pick up their treats inside! They will adapt to being blind by taking cues from wind, temperatures, and vibrations as well as sound and smell.

## **What can I do to help my dog?**

You will be upset and sad to know that your dog is blind, but your dog will not have those same emotions. Their world will be the same as before the appointment when your vet explained your dog is blind. Try to act normally and not molly-coddle them. For example, don't carry them; let them walk, help and guide them, they will find their own way. It is natural to want to give your dog extra treats and titbits – try to avoid this as much as you can, or introduce healthy treats like carrots!

**Please go to the next page for tangible tips to help your dog adapt to their blindness...**

## **How long will it take for my pet to adapt?**

It typically takes about two weeks for dogs to start to adapt and be more relaxed and less anxious. There is a lot of variation with this – some dogs will adapt more quickly, some may need a little longer. Your dog will probably sleep more and spend more time in their bed - this is natural and is usually nothing to worry about.

## **Should I consider euthanasia because my dog has gone blind?**

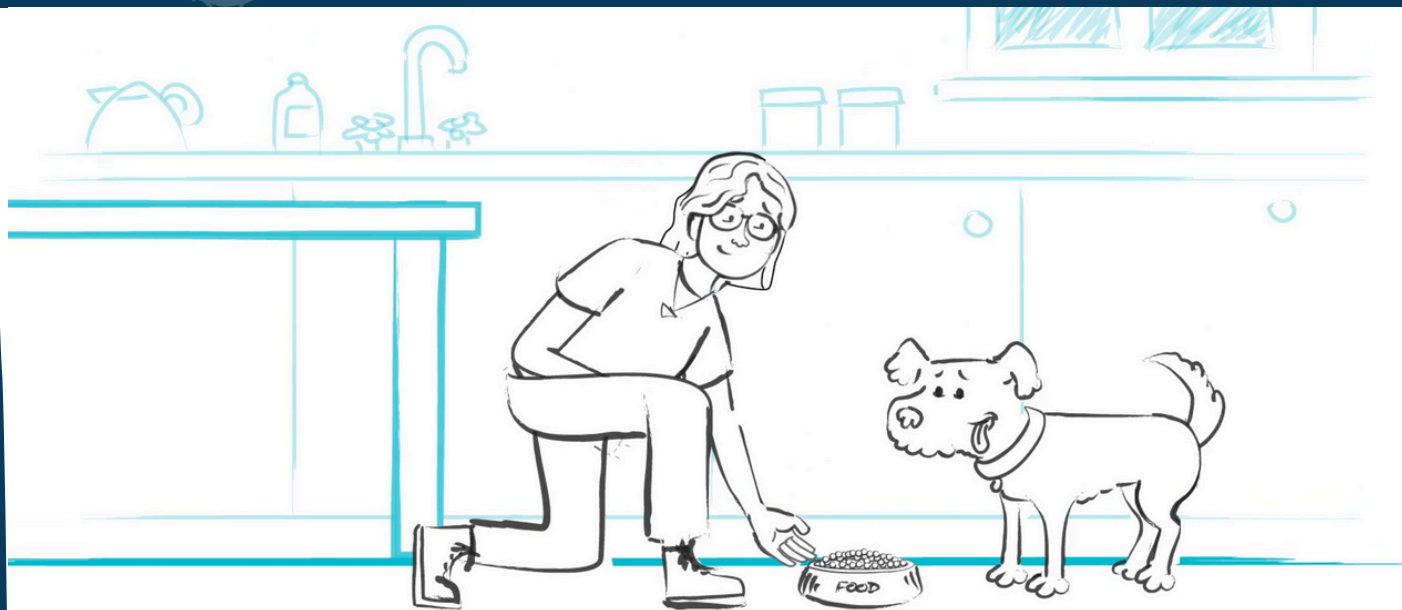
This is a very understandable question but we would invariably say no. Almost all blind dogs can have a very good quality of life as long as they are not in pain. They will need some time to adapt, see above, but most will manage very well, just like people. There are of course always exceptions and the ophthalmologist will be happy to discuss and help.

## **Do you recommend any specific websites?**

Yes: [www.blindtails.com](http://www.blindtails.com) is written by a veterinary ophthalmologist in the USA.



# LOOKING AFTER + LIVING WITH A BLIND DOG



## ADAPTING INSIDE THE HOME

- Keep everything the same at home – don't move things around. Dogs develop mind and scent maps of their environment very quickly. If you do need to move things, guide your dog around the new environment to get them used to it.
- Help your pet to learn where the water and food bowls are always kept and keep them in the same place. (A fountain-style water dish can be helpful because of the noise of the water.)
- Be aware of things that change, for example, try not to leave a cupboard doors open. Keep the home environment tidy to avoid trip hazards.
- Consider the flooring. Dogs are very good at recognising different flooring textures, e.g. carpet, rug, hard floor etc. These are called 'location cues'.
- Be aware of hazards such as loose wires and cables, hot stoves/fireplaces, sharp corners, and stairs. You may want to consider a stair gate. Get down on your hands and knees to mimic your dog's view of their world at their level! Look out for sharp objects, sharp houseplants.
- Create a safe zone or den for your dog.
- Talk to your dog before touching them to avoid startling them. This is especially important for visitors and children. Make sure that visitors to the home know your dog is blind so they can take extra care and be slow and gentle. Your presence will also reassure your dog when other people are in the house.
- Playing a radio or TV is helpful. This helps your dog to locate the sound in relation to other things.
- Try to be around when someone knocks at the front door or ring the bell, as this situation can be very disorientating for your dog.
- It can help to 'announce' who you are when you come home, or come downstairs from upstairs. Even though their amazing sense of smell will help them know who you are, these extra verbal cues provide extra kindness and awareness.
- There are several products on the market that may help reduce your dog's anxiety e.g. YuCalm, Adaptil (spray, plug-in diffuser, collar).

# LOOKING AFTER + LIVING WITH A BLIND DOG

## OUTSIDE IN THE GARDEN

- 🐾 Consider purchasing toys that involve your dog using their smell and/or hearing.
- 🐾 Chat to your dog more, and teach your dog some commands like 'up', 'down', 'step', 'curb' etc.
- 🐾 Cordon off ponds or bodies of water.
- 🐾 Trim plants, bushes, hedges and low-hanging plants/branches that could be harmful.
- 🐾 Place something like a wind chime by the back door so your pet can find the door after exploring their outside space/garden.



## WHEN OUT FOR WALKS

- 🐾 Consider a lead, harness or bandana with 'BLIND' or a tag with "I am blind", or similar.
  - 🐾 Talk to your dog and call their name regularly, so they know you are there and feel reassured.
  - 🐾 Extendable leads are good. Long, double-ended leads are good for two dogs.
  - 🐾 Open, flat ground is good. Take extra care near traffic and water.
  - 🐾 Update microchip details in case your dog gets lost.
- If you have another dog, put a bell on their collar, so your blind dog will always be able to hear where their friend is. If you don't have another dog, use your keys or a bell or something that jangles so your dog will know where you are.
- 🐾 Consider a tracking device in case your dog gets lost.