



Elham Valley Referrals

Rebecca Elks BVetMed DVOphtal MRCVS

24 Barham Business Park, Elham Valley Road
Barham, Canterbury CT4 6DQ

T 01303 840499; F 01303 840773
reception@elhamvalley.com

CARING FOR YOUR BLIND DOG

Sadly some eye conditions are not amenable to treatment. Your dog may be completely blind or partially sighted/visually impaired. Most dogs do adjust well to blindness, especially if vision has been lost gradually. When blindness has occurred suddenly it may take several weeks for an initial panic phase to pass. They will wish to be close to you for comfort and security. The following are some tips that will make life for your blind dog a lot more enjoyable:

- Try to keep the furniture in your home in the same place and do not leave obstacles such as shoes or bags in the way. Ensure there are no potentially dangerous areas such as corners or high steps for your dog to bump in to. Consider making a ramp for any steps that may lead to the garden.
- Maintain a consistent area for eating and sleeping. Keep your dog's bed and eating bowls in the same place. This is especially true for the water bowl. It may be a good idea to use a drinking water fountain so that your dog can hear where the water bowl is. Try to feed your dog around the same time each day to help establish a routine. Call your dog or tap your fingers to the side of the bowl to help them recognise feeding time. Gently warming the food will help your dog smell where it is.
- Try not to stress your dog by placing them in unfamiliar surroundings. Try to get someone to 'house and pet-sit' when you go away rather than placing your dog in an unfamiliar kennels.
- Your dog should still go outside and enjoy a walk. Use a harness to provide better guidance and control while walking. If your dog is blind on one side then try to walk them with their blind side closest to you so that their visual eye can see the world. Watch out for things your dog might bump into and stick to familiar walks. Talk to your dog or carry some bells so your dog can hear them when you walk so they know that you are close. Take your time on walks as smelling around will stimulate your dog.
- Your dog should wear a collar and identity tag stating that they are blind with your contact details
- Emphasise sound, smell, touch and taste when playing. Toys that make sounds such as balls with bells and squeak toys, or toys that have an odour (such as chew toys) provide stimulation.
- Ensure that your garden is secure as a blind dog cannot detect danger and run from it. A gundog whistle can help to get your dog's attention when roaming free in the garden.
- Ideally a blind dog should not venture upstairs due to the risk of falling on descent. Stair gates may be necessary. However, placing a different textured rug at the top/bottom of the stairs can help your dog recognise the start and finish of the stairs, thus preventing stumbling.
- Similarly, placing different textured rugs or mats in front of patio/glass doors may help your dog to recognise that an obstacle lies ahead.
- Some blind dogs benefit from the company of other dogs. You may consider a companion for your blind dog, preferably one of similar size and temperament (certainly not a boisterous puppy!). Also, placing a bell on the collar of other pets in the house may help prevent your dog from being startled.
- Try not to carry small dogs from one area to another, as this can confuse them. If they walk from area to area they remain more oriented. You may want to guide your dog through the house for a while until he/she gets their bearings, offering encouragement and praise.

Sudden onset blindness can be very distressing for any animal. Most settle within a few days as they learn to rely more on their other senses e.g. hearing and smell. Providing you take steps to help your dog they should gain in confidence every day. Their quality of life should continue to be good despite the loss of vision. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any worries or questions.