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Dogs are God's Second-Greatest Gift to Mankind.



Living With A Blind Dog

by

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*Whatever you believe to be God's Greatest Gift to Mankind —
whether that be Jesus Christ, the Laws of Moses, or the Koran,
or whether it be family, friends, or love —
There is no doubt that God's Second-Greatest Gift is Dogs!*

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INTRODUCTION

As noted on the cover of this manual -- and as noted on every page of my web site -- "*Dogs are God's Second Greatest Gift to Mankind.*" Because dogs are special, and more closely attuned to mankind than any other beast, most of us cherish them and seek to protect and care for them as needed. When we first bring a dog into our homes -- whether a puppy or a more mature dog -- we hope and pray that she will always be happy and healthy.¹



And, all terrifying stories to the contrary, most dogs do spend the vast majority of their lives happy and healthy. But some dogs, to our sorrow, develop health problems; and some of those health problems result in blindness.

Many people are surprised to learn that loss of vision is not as horrific an occurrence as it would be for a human. This is because dogs rely significantly on their other senses.

It is rare -- though not completely unheard of -- for a dog to be born blind. Far more often, your dog has gone blind as a result of some other disease or condition that you've already been treating. Blindness affects as many as one older dog in ten, but it can be found in dogs of any age, and in varying degrees of vision loss.

¹ Throughout this manual, I'll be referring to your dog as "she," which (a) eliminates the madness of constantly repeating "he/she" and "his/her" and "him/her." And "she" also honors and remembers my own Beloved Malina, who is currently waiting for me at the Rainbow Bridge.

No matter the degree of her blindness, the vast majority of dogs suffering vision loss still live long and healthy lives. They typically continue to be active, continue to be excellent companions, and continue to live full lives. But they do need our help.

All domesticated dogs rely upon their human owners to an extent, though many could survive more independently if the need arose. Dogs that have lost their vision, on the other hand, are much more in need of our assistance. They need us to assist them with consistency, direction, and -- in many cases -- physical support, too.

As you are teaching your dog how to adapt to her blindness, you are also teaching yourself how to live with her blindness. This process - - and this manual -- is all about you and your dog combining your respective resources and teaching each other how to adjust to her blindness.

Here's what you can look forward to finding in this manual:

Chapter 1: Introduction. You're reading it now.

Chapter 2: Is Your Dog Going Blind? Here we'll take a look at the behaviors and symptoms that you need to be aware of. It isn't always easy to know whether your dog is going blind. Watching for these signs will help you to help her.

Chapter 3: Causes of Blindness. What causes your dog to go blind? Here we'll investigate the primary causes of blindness in dogs.

Chapter 4: Making the Adjustment: Using Vocalization, Cues, and Other Tools. You can do much to aid your dog in her adjustment to vision loss. The things you do for and with her can help her to live a graceful life even though she is becoming -- or has become -- vision impaired.

Chapter 5: Your dog's active life. Despite declining or absent vision, your dog can still be happy and active. In this chapter we'll spend a day with Sam, a blind Cocker Spaniel. And we'll point you toward additional literature on this subject that you are likely to find worthwhile.

IS YOUR DOG GOING BLIND?

Surprisingly enough, you may have difficulty knowing whether your dog is suffering vision loss. Particularly if she is an older dog with a well-established routine -- a dog who knows her way around "blindfolded," as it were -- you may not know whether she can see where she is going, or if she's using her other senses and a sense of habit to get where she needs to go.

So you need to know what to look for in a dog who's losing her sight. Then we can explore reasons and responses and how you can help her to compensate for her infirmity.

The most common cause of a dog losing her vision is some other health issue. You are probably, though not certainly, aware of the other issue. You may even be treating the other health issue, assisted by your dog's vet.



Dogs don't typically go blind quickly. They, like most humans who go blind, go through a period of gradual vision deterioration. During this period of gradual vision loss, she has time to adapt. And her adaptation may be so good that you'll have a hard time knowing for sure just how well she can -- or cannot -- see.

In those cases where your dog's loss of vision is sudden and dramatic, it can be a problem of great magnitude. She will be confused, disoriented, and frightened at her sudden blindness. She may, though, behave in a way that helps to clue you in about her problem.

Whether your dog's vision loss is gradual or sudden, there are a number of signs that you can be alert for. Here are eight signs to look for:

Occasional clumsiness:

Your dog -- previously the picture of grace and competence -- suddenly begins to run into walls and other objects. It's possible that she'll quickly bring herself aright. Or she might be seen to be confused, seeking a new direction so that she can proceed again in the correct direction.

Any dog can be clumsy from time to time, just like any human -- Fred Astaire being the possible only exception -- can sometimes be clumsy. But if your dog is losing her vision, her clumsiness will be more dramatic and probably more recurring than can be written off to "simple clumsiness."

Excessive sleeping:

Sleeping is easier than trying to make your way around when you are suffering vision loss. Dogs can figure this out, just like you can. If your dog is now spending much of her day asleep, she may be suffering vision loss. Alternatively, she may be suffering from something else, such as depression, a physical ailment, or laziness. Excessive sleeping, by itself, is not a definite sign of vision loss. But you should take note if you see this symptom along with others we're mentioning here.

Dependence on you:

You should be somewhat concerned if your dog has become significantly more dependent upon you. If she relies upon you to take her outside, or to her food, or to other routine activities, it's possible her vision is going -- or has gone -- away. You'll be more likely to see this behavior in older dogs; younger dogs that haven't

yet come to rely so much upon you may not demonstrate such a degree of dependence.

Again, this behavior could be a result of vision loss. But it could also be a sign of aging in general. As you watch over your dog, you'll need to consider a number of potential symptoms, any one of which might be pointing to blindness or to some other underlying cause.

Inability for find water and food dishes:

If your dog's food bowls, still in the same place as always, are now difficult or impossible for your dog to find, you should have a strong suspicion that she has serious vision problems. If she appears confused or lost, seeking about for food and water -- perhaps eventually finding them through her sense of smell -- seriously consider that vision loss is at the root of her difficulties.

You'll swiftly recognize, of course, that by moving her bowls you can quickly get a feel for her vision capabilities. Though she may eventually find them using her sense of smell, a lack of visual cues could induce disorientation and yet another factor for you to consider as you evaluate her eyesight.

Lack of interest in interactive behaviors:

Your dog almost certainly responds to your facial expressions; she finds comfort there, and knowledge of your own thoughts and moods. This is especially so during periods of play or close affection. But if she now demonstrates less interest in playing with you, or if she shows little response while you are being affectionate, vision loss could be an underlying cause for her diminished responses to you.

Becoming lost in the house:

It may be taken as a strong hint of vision loss of your dog experiences difficulties finding the stairs to your bedroom. Or she

may become lost while in the yard. Dogs are not limited to navigating visually; she can eventually use her sense of smell and other senses to arrive at the intended destination. But evidence of confusion or fear while she's in familiar surroundings should alert you to the likelihood of vision loss making even her regular and predictable behaviors difficult.

Fearful behavior or becoming easily startled:

There can be any number of reasons for this -- not just vision loss. Nonetheless, if your dog begins demonstrating fear in situations that didn't previously bother her; or if she now is very easily startled, then you need to consider that ***one of the potential reasons*** for this behavior is that she is suffering a loss of vision.

Confusion and stress in unfamiliar surroundings:

Your dog uses her vision to swiftly acclimatize to new, unfamiliar surroundings. But if you now find that new surroundings tend to leave her confused and stressed, it's time again to consider visual problems as an underlying cause. This is especially so if she is usually quick to adapt and laid-back in her attitudes.

Until you have a diagnosis for her problems -- it may be something other than blindness, after all -- do your best to avoid stressful situations. Losing her sight is stressful enough -- try not to add to her difficulties.

In summary:

You will have noticed that no one of these symptoms is a positive indicator that your dog is blind or losing her vision. Rather, a cumulative view of all these signs will give you greater insight as to her vision problems, if any.

It is through close observation of all your dog's behaviors and circumstances that you may recognize a pattern of behavior tending to the conclusion that she's having a hard time with her vision.

But do not, all alone, diagnose that your dog is blind or is losing her vision. That diagnosis is best made by-and-with your veterinarian.

To assist the vet in properly diagnosing your dog, keep a journal of the signs and symptoms you've observed. Don't trust solely to your memory for this, actually keep a written journal. Your vet will be much helped in diagnosing your dog if you can provide him a record of what you observed and when you observed it.

In Chapter 3 we'll take a look at some of the most common reasons that dogs suffer vision loss and blindness. There are many potential reasons for such vision loss, but we'll look at the most common ones here.

Get it all:

I'm not much of a salesman, so I didn't try to inflict upon you some hyped-up, super-salesman, "gotta buy it today because the price goes up tomorrow" sales letter. I figured that the actual book itself -- as opposed to sales copy -- should convince you of its value. So . . .

If you've found the initial chapters of *Living With a Blind Dog* worthwhile, you can buy the entire manual, download it immediately, and resume reading it within a couple minutes. You'll pay \$9.97 to PayPal and immediately be taken to the full manual. Once it's loaded in your browser, save it anywhere on your computer's hard drive and read it again and again, whenever you want.

Just click the link below to get the entire manual within the next couple of minutes.

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