

## HINTS FOR LIVING WITH A BLIND DOG

### New to the family

- First, get down on the floor and crawl around at the dog's eye level to find anything that might be dangerous.
- Have children crawl around blindfolded to see what it will be like for their new playmate.
- Try to have something familiar to the dog -- toy, blanket, bed, etc. -- for comfort in a strange new place.
- If you have time, provide the dog with something with your scent on it at least a few days before getting the dog.
- Decide on a specific area that will be the dog's home base; an area where it can be contained. Consider having a crate there for it to sleep and eat in.
- If you use dog crates, you can turn them on their sides so that the doors open UP instead of to the side. You can bungee them in place. That way your blind dog never runs into the doors, not knowing how wide they are cracked open.
- Get Living with Blind Dogs by Caroline Levin (<http://www.petcarebooks.com>)
- Visit the list at Yahoo!Groups Blind Dogs for support and to ask any questions you have (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/blinddogs>) we're here to help!

### Padding furniture and corners

- Bubble wrap taped around table legs, wall or cabinet corners, etc.
- Batting from the fabric store
- Foam pipe insulation from the home center plumbing dept.

### Provide a base

- Keep a bed in rooms the dog is most comfortable -- maybe one in the bedroom and one in the family room.
- A crate with an open door provides a safe haven.
- Put a mat under food and water dishes.

### Stairs - stepping off into the unknown

- Use baby gates, decorative fireplace screens, etc. to block off stairs.
- Don't push. A traumatic fall can cause a permanent fear. Give it time.
- A treat (piece of kibble) on each step or two going down.
- Stand in front of the dog and hook your finger lightly in the collar or harness. Encourage, but try not to pull the dog down the steps.
- Practice going up and down until it's done smoothly.
- Put mats at the top and bottom of stairs.
- If you use a ramp, make sure there is a raised edge so the dog doesn't step off the side.

### Outside, Landmarks inside and out

- Small wind chime at the back door
- "Path" of carpet runners or heavy rubber shelf liner
- Mat under bowls; door mats at doors, steps, and stairs
- Scents on danger areas (vanilla, citrus, furniture polish, etc.) It doesn't need to be strong, a dog's sense of smell is *much* better than yours.
- If your dog runs into things in unfamiliar areas, use a Littlest Angel Vest \* to protect the head/nose
- Use Doggles\* or an Eye Shield\* to protect the eyes or prevent a blinding glare in bright light for dogs with cataracts and some vision

### Guiding

- Harnesses seem to work best, and should always be used instead of a collar for dogs with glaucoma.
- Pass a leash through a length of PVC pipe for a rigid guide

- Doggie door: hold the door open and lure the dog through with a treat
- Work on vocabulary: "careful", "Watch!", "step up", "step down", "find it", etc.

#### Getting along

- Bell -- on your pant leg so the dog knows where you are
- Bells -- on other animals in the house
- Crate to retreat to, that is safe and familiar
- Try to speak to or lightly blow on the dog (not in its ear) before touching
- Aggression may be due to a feeling of vulnerability, but it may also be caused by pain, a thyroid condition, or other physical problems. Time for a vet check.
- Confusion and reversing day/night may be signs of senility. Look into OTC phosphatidylserine (PS) or Rx Anipryl.

#### Emotions (Google these for info or check the "Useful Links" .PDF file)

- Flower Essences (Anaflores for your dog, Bach for you and/or your dog) can help.
- Anxiety Wrap can take the edge off
- D.A.P. (Dog Appeasing Pheromone) mimics a natural comforting pheromone produced by mother dogs

#### Toys and play and exercise

- Emphasize sound and smell
- Roll-A-Treat Ball (dispenses treats as it rolls), balls and toys, such as Play-N-Speak Interactive Dog Toys, with recordings in them (NOT unattended), scented balls & toys
- Have a special long leash to use in a wide open area for running in a safe circle around you
- Slow down on walks -- smelling around means more now
- A long hall makes a good "runway" for a game of fetch
- A large rigid plastic pool with a large ball in it to chase round and round
- Go find it" -- hide smelly treats

\*Littlest Angel Vests can be seen at: <http://angelvest.homestead.com/>

\*Doggles can be seen at: <http://angelvest.homestead.com/Doggles.html>

\*Eye Shield can be seen at: <http://angelvest.homestead.com/EyeShield.html>

A big thank you to Shari Burghart, from Littlest Angel Vest for putting this list of hints together!