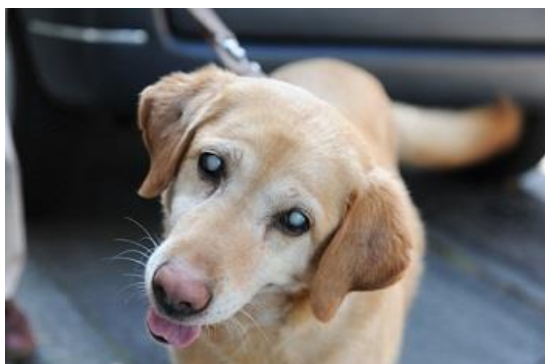




## Living with a Blind Dog

Finding out your dog has poor vision may be a surprise and can be concerning. Dogs generally cope very well with just a little bit of support. Over time these adjustments become second-nature, and you will likely find yourself sitting back wondering why you were so worried and upset to begin with.



### **Rule #1: Dogs aren't people!**

We often forget the fact that dogs aren't people. It's very unlikely that your dog will mourn their vision like you would if your vision became impaired. With this in mind, take your negative emotions and leave them at the door when dealing with your dog. Dogs pick up on our energy and they can feel when you are sad or worried. When you are around your dog you want to be strong and confident so they know that everything is okay.

### **Rule #2: Avoid picking up your dog**

It may be quicker and simpler to carry your dog where s/he needs to go. If the situation is dangerous, feel free to intervene; otherwise it is important to let your dog learn to navigate your home. Dogs learn to count steps, listen to sounds, and feel differences in flooring texture that will help them navigate. If you pick up your dog and move to a different spot, the dog can become disorientated.

If your dog needs assistance, stand nearby and speak to him or her. If you must pick up your dog, make sure to put her down in a familiar 'home base' like her bed. Chances are that she will be able to navigate from that spot a bit better.

### **Rule #3: Don't move the furniture too often**

Contrary to popular belief, you are allowed to move your furniture or even move house if you have a blind dog. The trick is to not do it too often-- each time you move things in your house your dog has to learn how to navigate the house all over again. When you move furniture just guide your dog around a few times until they get used

Pets And Their People

Fulham Gardens Veterinary Surgery - 441 Tapley's Hill Rd, Fulham Gardens 5024 - ph:8355 5475

Black Forest Veterinary Surgery - 647 South Rd, Black Forest 5035 - ph: 8351 6066

Unley Veterinary Surgery - 36 Unley Rd, Unley 5061 - ph: 8272 3400

to the new arrangement. Most dogs are pretty quick at figuring out that things have changed and they will get used to it quite quickly.

Keeping bags, toys, and shoes picked up and out of the walkway is also important. This can be a challenge with toddler children, but older kids will begin to understand that their tidiness is helping their family friend.

#### **Rule #4: Keep your dog leashed**

Blind dogs can be just as adventurous as sighted dogs; they may be quite motivated by their noses and take off following a trail. They can easily fall off cliffs, into lakes and rivers or holes in the ground so it's best to keep your dog leashed when you are out. You can purchase long extender leads to give your dog some extra freedom.

#### **Rule #5: Warn people that your dog is blind**

Whether you have guests in your home or you meet people on the street whilst walking your dog, ensure you let them know that your dog is blind. Various vests, bandanas, and leashes are available that help inform people as they approach.



It is important to teach people to speak to your dog as they approach, and

suggest holding a hand out for a sniff.

#### **Rule #6: Use a harness and double-handled leash on your blind dog**

Blind dogs can be a little erratic sometimes when they are out walking. A harness is a good way to keep them under control but it is also a necessity for a dog with glaucoma as it reduces the amount of pressure on their neck. A double-handled leash is ideal for a blind dog. These leashes have two handles, one at the top where you would normally expect one to be and one down further near the collar. This handle allows you to keep the dog close to you in tight situations.

#### **Rule #7: Teach your dog the 'Warning Word'**

A command such as 'sit' or 'stop' can literally be a lifesaver for your dog. Teaching it and ensuring you can count on your dog following will help avoid painful bumps to the head, eye injuries, or falls. This is important particularly if you let your dog off the leash. Choose a phrase that suits you.

#### **Rule #8: Teach your dog to 'Step up' and 'Step down'**

You will notice when walking your dog s/he will just walk right into it a kerb or step, so it is up to you to let your dog know when one is approaching. Words like 'step up' and 'step down' will need to be part of your vocabulary when walking your dog.

#### **Rule #9: Talk to your dog before patting them**

A blind dog can get startled when you pat them without warning and depending on the dog this may result in a bite. Always talk to your dog first

Pets And Their People

Fulham Gardens Veterinary Surgery - 441 Tapley's Hill Rd, Fulham Gardens 5024 - ph:8355 5475

Black Forest Veterinary Surgery - 647 South Rd, Black Forest 5035 - ph: 8351 6066

Unley Veterinary Surgery - 36 Unley Rd, Unley 5061 - ph: 8272 3400

before patting them just so they know you are there. Ensure that your children understand this one.

### **Rule #10: Safety first!**

Ensure you fence off anything that is likely to be a problem for your dog. Fence off any pools or ponds, or ensure that if your dog falls in they know exactly how to get out. Also ensure that the fireplace is well protected...an excited dog can lose their sense of direction pretty easily and can run straight into a fire.

Adapted From  
[www.blinddogsupport.com](http://www.blinddogsupport.com), 1 Sept,  
2012

.....  
We have compiled a list of products to improve the quality of life for pets with special needs and their families. We have included devices specifically for dogs with vision challenges. Let us know if you are interested, and we'd be happy to get you a copy.

#### **Pets And Their People**

Fulham Gardens Veterinary Surgery - 441 Tapley's Hill Rd, Fulham Gardens 5024 – ph:8355 5475

Black Forest Veterinary Surgery – 647 South Rd , Black Forest 5035 – ph: 8351 6066

Unley Veterinary Surgery - 36 Unley Rd, Unley 5061 – ph: 8272 3400