

# Caring For Your Blind Pet

## Ophthalmology Service



Michigan Veterinary  
Specialists<sup>sm</sup>

www.michvet.com

We Can Help

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### Causes of Blindness

Unfortunately, blindness in our pets occur more often than we would like. Causes of blindness include retinal disease with no known treatment, glaucoma, cataracts, retinal detachment, serious eye injuries and a variety of other diseases.

### Your Pet's Adjustment

Vision in cats and dogs is quite different from ours. They have better night vision and peripheral vision than we do, but their ability to focus and see fine details is less developed. Also, they do not have well developed color vision. Our pets are less dependent on vision than we are. They utilize their senses of hearing and smell very efficiently. Because of this,

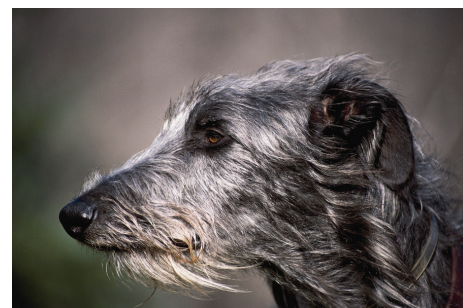
loss of vision in cats and dogs is less traumatic compared to loss of vision in people.

They will not feel sorry for themselves and usually adapt very well to the loss of vision. Pets that become blind seem to undergo a 1-2 month period of adaptation during which time many changes occur. They will bump into things and it can be a very difficult time for you and your pet. All of these signs will pass with time. Over 95% of blind pets readily memorize the layout of their home and yard and can function normally or near normally with vision deficits. It does take time for them to learn to get around using their other senses. They will make happy pets with some help from you to make their life a little easier.

### Helpful Recommendations

Here are a few guidelines to provide better care for the blind pet:

- Memory is used to negotiate the house. Avoid changing the environment, such as moving furniture or food/water bowls. If your pet is placed in a new environment, give it time to adjust to the new surroundings. Be careful of stairways, open doors and objects that could injure your pet.
- Teach them to walk on a harness or lead so they can be exercised safely. Choke collars are discouraged. Encourage exercise, whether in a fenced yard or on a leash to prevent excessive weight gain. Never let your pet out without supervision unless in a fenced yard.
- Encourage them to use their other senses to compensate for vision loss. Buy noisy toys or toys that have a distinct recognizable odor. Some people also get a companion animal that the blind pet can follow around using its hearing and smell.
- Behavioral changes (aggression, depression, fear) can sometimes be observed with sudden blindness. Avoid stressing or scaring blind pets. Instruct family members to vocalize the pets name and approach them slowly. Their fear usually passes with time, as the pet learns to adjust to the blindness.
- Most causes of blindness are not painful so the quality of life for your pet is good. If pain is involved it will cause the pet to be depressed. Other signs to watch for are associated with changes in the appearance of the eye, such as reddening of the whites of the eye, large amounts of discharge and scratching or rubbing of the eye.



Blind cats and dogs can have a good quality of life and make very happy pets as long as you follow these few guidelines. If you have any questions or concerns, please call our ophthalmology department.