



Caring for your newly adopted family member



Congratulations, we are so happy that you have chosen to provide a homeless animal with a new home. As you are aware the companion animal that you have chosen to adopt is blind/visually impaired and although blind animals make wonderful pets they do need some extra care to help make their lives easier. Here are some tips and suggestions that you may find helpful as you start your new life together:-

- 1) You may have been given a full medical report with regards to the sight capacity of your new pet, but we still suggest that one of the first things that you do is take your new pet to your veterinarian for a check-up. This will ensure that your veterinarian is fully aware of the current health of your pet and can make some suggestions to help you ensure there are no further complications due to your pet's health;
- 2) The key thing to remember when you get your pet home is that with a visually impaired animal they have to rely upon their other remaining senses – most importantly smell, touch and hearing.
- 3) When you get home your new pet will need to make and memorize an internal map of your home by using their sense of smell and touch. It is important that you keep close to your new pet while they are going through this process to protect them from falling down stairs or hurting themselves in some way. Your new pet will bump into things, that's inevitable (padding some of the furniture legs ahead of time will minimize the potential for your new pet to hurt himself), but once he has created that internal map he will use his memory to guide him in the future. **IMPORTANT** – don't move the furniture or leave obstacles on the floor unless absolutely necessary otherwise your pet will become disorientated;
- 4) You can help your pet to create an internal map by providing different textured flooring to identify different rooms. You can also apply perfume or another scent to furniture and stairs to alert your pet to their whereabouts.
- 5) Once you have decided where to put your pet's food, water, bed and litterbox in your home always keep them in the same place to ensure that your pet can find them when needed;
- 6) Provide your pet with a pet water fountain rather than the traditional water bowl – it will help him to locate the water plus many animals prefer to drink flowing water;
- 7) Use your voice and work with your pet to teach him simple commands such as "STEP" to let them know where stairs are "WATCH" to warn them of danger and "OK" to let them know they are safe;
- 8) Some blind animals benefit from the company of a sighted animal, in certain cases the sighted animal will help the blind animal to navigate through life safely;
- 9) Blind animals can become scared and withdrawn without your support, stroke and massage your new pet gently but frequently and talk to him regularly to get him used to your presence;
- 10) Try not to startle your pet by coming up to him unexpectedly. Alert your pet to your presence by developing a sound that he can recognize such as rubbing your fingers together and make sure that other animals in the house wear a bell or tags that will make a noise when they walk;
- 11) Blind animals still need the same amount of exercise – buy noisy or scented toys for indoor cats to play with and teach your dog to walk on a harness. You will want to restrict outdoor exercise to walking on a harness in your backyard to begin with but if your blind dog becomes more confident you may well get to the stage where you can broaden his horizons. **REMEMBER** your blind pet guides itself using its internal memory map, sounds and smells, once your pet strays beyond its usual boundaries it will not be able to find its way home – make sure it is microchipped and registered with 24PetWatch to give it a chance of getting home safely.

We wish you and your newly adopted pet well and know that the two of you will become Forever Friends