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Blindness in Pets

Just like in humans, there are several different reasons why pets can become blind. Read below to learn about common conditions that cause blindness, as well as what steps you can take to help your blind pet adjust to their surroundings.

Losing Sight

There are a multitude of reasons why pets may lose their vision. One reason is due to normal aging changes. Certain diseases processes, such as high blood pressure (hypertension) and diabetes, can lead to a multitude of vision problems, such as cataracts. Another disease seen in dogs is called SARDS (Sudden Acquired Retinal Degeneration Syndrome), and causes rapid vision loss. Finally, certain situations, such as running into a stick or cancer of the eye, may lead to a pet's eye needing to be enucleated (removed), ultimately causing the pet to become partially or fully blind.



Adapting to the Dark

Many times, you may not notice that your pet is having vision issues until later on in the disease process. Pets tend to have excellent hearing, and their sense of smell makes it easy for them to adapt to their surroundings! However, especially in later stages of vision loss, you may start to notice your pet bumping into furniture, losing track of their toys, or being more timid or clingy as they move around the house.

As long as your pet is in a familiar environment, they will likely do well navigating their surroundings, even with complete vision loss. The key is making sure that their environment stays consistent. Try to keep furniture in the same location if possible, and make sure to avoid leaving obstacles behind (such as leaving your shoes in the middle of the floor, etc.) If you have to move furniture or other objects around, make sure to walk your pet around the new obstacle to help them become familiar with the new path. You can also consider products such as Muffin's Halo, a plastic, halo-like device that protects your pet's head from bumping into objects, and which can help your pet better learn their environment.

Having a blind pet does not necessarily mean that their quality of life is low. There are plenty of ways to help your pet cope with their disability! If you have any questions about your blind pet or what you can do to help your pet adapt, give your veterinarian a call!

Best regards,
Rachel Rielinger, DVM



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