



Deaf Blind Pets



Causes of hearing and vision loss together

Causes of hearing and vision loss together

- Congenital- double merle
- Aging Changes- slowly progressive hearing and vision loss in older animals
- Trauma/ Injury
- Combination of causes of deafness and blindness- see Blind Pets and Deaf Pets info PDFs for diagnostics and treatments

Caring for Deaf Blind Pets

- Can't hear verbal cues and can't see hand signals.
- Startle easily, wake up gently.
- Miss important body language from other dogs.
- Sense of smell is very important.

- Communicate with touch- affection and tap signals.
- Training using food lure and taps
- There are no set signals, can use what comes naturally to you,
- Mapping using sense of touch, and smell. Most will naturally want to explore and learn about their environment
- Variable ground coverings are helpful. Mats under food dishes, by doorways, before stairs,
- Familiarity with environment comes with time and experience.
- Need to be kept safe- gates, outdoor fencing, indoors keep cats off counters and stove tops and other dangerous areas
- Keep home environment familiar and safe but most are flexible once they learn about new changes like moving furniture around
- Halo especially helpful for older dogs because they are less flexible and more anxious about bumping into walls and other objects
- Some animals have trouble adjusting to acute blindness- treat anxiety. Help them by having lots of physical contact, guide them with leash and harness

Caring for Senior Deaf Blind Dogs and other pets

- Have time to adjust when hearing and vision loss is slowly progressive
- More difficult adjustment when acute
- Limit area to avoid becoming disoriented- use gates and close doors
- Use variable floor and ground coverings
- Can use scents for increased recognition of areas in some dogs and other animals
- Keep safe with gates
- Direct contact- lots of soothing touch, progress to tap and touch signals
- Adjusting to using alternate senses- over time, if possible, they will start to use their nose more but really depends on the age and status of cognitive function
- For cats, have litter box and food accessible in safe area, older deaf blind cats may not be able to jump on counters to reach food and litter boxes due to arthritis and other aging changes

Double Merle Breeding

- Merle to merle breeding results in a 25% chance that each puppy will receive two dominant merle genes (double merle).
- Double merle is linked to white hair coat, and congenital ear and eye defects of varying severity.
- Some double merle dogs are deaf, some are blind, some are both, and some can see and hear, some are partially deaf and they can have varying degrees of vision loss.
- Breeds- Herding breeds- Aussies, Border Collies, Cattle Dogs, Catahoulas, G Danes, Dachshunds, Chihuahuas, Bulldogs, mixes that have merle color
- Intentional and accidental breeding- Needs to be Discouraged!!
- Many are euthanized by veterinarians at the request of breeders. Many are dumped or turned over to rescue groups. Many are in shelters.



Double Merle Eye Defects

Double Merle Eye defects include

- Microphthalmia- small sized eyeballs
- starburst pupil- looks like a blue and gray starburst
- corectopia-pupil points downward
- third eyelids protrude over cornea and pupil
- detached retinas
- no eyes
- prone to uveitis (inflammation) and glaucoma (increased pressure)
- Nystagmus- eye twitching, usually benign in double merle dogs
- Overall abnormal development of the eye

Double Merle Ear Defects are due to a lack of pigment in the lining of the ear prevents cilia development which leads to bilateral or unilateral deafness



Quality of Life for Deaf, Blind, and Deaf Blind Pets

- Wide range of hearing and vision impairment with a wide range of outcomes.
- Evaluate Quality of Life for each individual, not in comparison to any other animal.
- Consider other systemic illness and how it affects pets aside from being deaf blind..
- Animals with non-life threatening disabilities commonly surpass initial expectations
- Seniors take time but ultimately settle into a new routine.
- Support from network of social media groups.
- People who choose to care for deaf and blind dogs expect and accept compromise and limitations, and the commitment needed to provide accommodations and extra care to allow their pets to live their BEST LIFE.

Support for Blind & Deaf Pet Parents

Webinar

Teaching Deaf, Blind, and Deaf Blind Dogs, concepts apply to all animals, not just dogs.

click [HERE](#)



Check our Disabled Pets [YouTube Channel](#) for instructional videos about basic care and training of deaf, blind, and deaf blind dogs.

www.disabledpets.org

Support

Support for pet parents with **deaf blind dogs** is [HERE](#)