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- [Virginia Tech Home](#)
- [VT News Home](#)
- [Latest News](#)
- [Campus Notices](#)
- [Event Calendar](#)
- [Photo Galleries](#)
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- [For the Media](#)
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# Virginia Tech News

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## Veterinary college to offer free eye exams for service dogs

By [Christy Jackson](#)

BLACKSBURG, Va., April 25, 2008 -- The Virginia Maryland-Regional College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech will collaborate with the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists (ACVO) and Pet Health Systems during the first ACVO National Service Dog Eye Exam on Friday, May 16, 2008. Merial Inc. is the official event sponsor.

Over 140 board-certified veterinary ophthalmologists and 1,300 general practice veterinarians from across the United States are expected to work together to provide sight-saving eye examinations and preventative health reports for service dogs at no cost to their owners/agents during the event.

Service dogs include guide dogs, handicapped assistance dogs, bomb and drug detection dogs, K-9 dogs, and search and rescue dogs.

"Excellent vision in a service dog is mandatory," said [Dr. Phillip Pickett](#), a veterinary ophthalmologist and professor in the [Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences](#). "In some cases, the good vision of the service dog is the 'vision' of the owner."

In addition to the eye examination, participants will receive a Pet Wellness Report, including a lifestyle assessment and comprehensive serum chemistry profile conducted by their primary care veterinarian at no cost to the patient or doctor. The Pet Wellness Report service is sponsored by Pet Health Systems.

The goal of the program is to foster the health and well-being of the service dogs that play such an important role in the lives of individuals and organizations that promote public safety and well-being, according to the organizers.

Program organizers estimate nearly \$1 million in services will be provided for the 5,000 to 10,000 service dogs that are expected to be evaluated during the event.

The veterinary college has offered free screening examinations and consultations for service dogs for more than 20 years, according to Pickett. "This is our way of giving back to the community and to those individuals whose lives depend on the health and well being of their service dog," he said.

In order to qualify for participation in the program, service dogs must be "working dogs" that have been certified through a formal training program or organization.

- [Learn more about the program or register for participation.](#)

The following non-profit organizations are supporting this effort: American Animal Hospital Association, American Veterinary




Medical Association, state Veterinary Medical Associations (United States and Canada), American Society of Veterinary Medical Association Executives, Veterinary Hospital Managers Association, Veterinary Ophthalmic Technicians Society, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Guiding Eyes for the Blind, North American Police Dog Association, National Narcotic Detection Dog Association, Patriot Paws Service Dogs, and Service Dogs of America. More organizational support is pending.

PHOTO INFORMATION: Pickett (left), a professor of ophthalmology in the veterinary college at Virginia Tech, examines a patient. Pickett will join with other veterinary ophthalmologists across the nation for the first National Service Dog Eye Exam on May 16 on the college's Blacksburg campus.

Contact Christy Jackson at [cjacks@vt.edu](mailto:cjacks@vt.edu) or (540) 231-7239.

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### Other News

- *06.30.2008*  
**School of Construction student Chris Strock wins graduate service award**
- *06.27.2008*  
**Board of Visitors approves first-ever promotion of instructors**
- *06.25.2008*  
**Administrator honored for contributions to global food security, poverty reduction, and Green Revolution in Asia**

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### Campus Notices

- **Paving project alter access to two streets, two parking lots beginning June 30**
- **Fitness and personal training summer sale**
- **Revised, reprinted publications now available; supplies exhausted of two publications**
- **New requirement for reporting state vehicle fuel and maintenance data**

[More Notices](#)

### Event Calendar

*Today is Monday June 30*

- *All day*  
**Summer II Classes begin**
- *Tuesday July 1*  
*All day*  
**Summer Arts Festival: Armory Art Gallery Exhibit**
- *Tuesday July 1*  
*All day*  
**Summer Arts Festival: Perspective Art Gallery Exhibit**

[More Events](#)