

## Veterinary college to offer free eye exams for service dogs May 6

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BLACKSBURG, VA., April 13, 2010 -- For a third consecutive year, the Virginia Maryland-Regional College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech will join with the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists (ACVO) and Merial Inc. and participate in the Service Dog Eye Exam Month this May.



The veterinary college will hold a free eye clinic for service dogs on Thursday, May 6 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital located on the Blacksburg campus. The clinic at Virginia Tech will be the only clinic offered in Southwest Virginia this year.

To receive a free eye examination for a service dog, dog owners or service agencies must [register on the ACVO website](#) before the May 6 event.

Service dogs include guide dogs, handicapped assistance dogs, detection dogs, police dogs, search and rescue dogs and formally trained and certified therapy dogs. Dogs must be active 'working dogs' that were certified by a formal training program or organization or currently enrolled in a formal training program to qualify.

"Excellent vision in a service dog is essential," 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."

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.

More than 170 board certified veterinary ophthalmologists in the United States and Canada will provide free sight-saving eye exams to thousands of service dogs at no cost to their owners/agents during Service Dog Eye Exam Month.

IMAGE INFORMATION: Dr. Phil Pickett examines a St. Francis Foundation service dog.

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