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[Free Eye Exams for Service Dogs](#)

by [Pet Safety Blog](#) on Thursday April 08, 2010.

I realize that only a few days ago I posted an article regarding pet insurance, but this is a free event that I felt was an article worth reading.

Thousands of Service Dogs to Receive Free Sight Saving Eye Exams in the U.S. and Canada

ACVO®/Merial® National Service Dog Eye Exam Event brings together veterinary ophthalmologists and thousands of service dogs for free exams. Registration begins April 1st for May 2010 event.

There are thousands of pet parents that rely on a guide dog, and depend on them for assistance in their everyday lives. These animals are being represented because of their very special jobs and have allowed independence for their master. This is exactly the reason for the National Service Dog Eye Exam. Guide dogs, handicapped assistance dogs, detection dogs and search and rescue dogs selflessly serve the public. **Therefore, for the month of May 2010, the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists (ACVO) is launching the 3rd annual ACVO/Merial National Service Dog Eye Exam Event** to help serve the dogs who dedicate their lives to serving us. More than 150 board



certified veterinary ophthalmologists in the U.S. and Canada will provide free sight-saving eye exams to thousands of service dogs.

This event is a success each year due to the outstanding support of our volunteer ophthalmologists, our sponsors and the service dog community. An eye exam for these dogs helps to identify any health issues in their early stages. The complete ocular exam will detect any retinal disease or early cataracts, and looks for things that will limit their vision. There could be an ingrown hair or anything that can result in a scratch of the cornea.

To qualify, dogs must be active "working dogs" that were certified by a formal training program or organization or currently enrolled in a formal training program. The certifying organization could be national, regional or local in nature. Specific service groups are listed on the website at www.ACVOeyexam.org **Owners/agents for the dog(s) must FIRST register the animal via an online registration form beginning April 1**, on the website of the ACVOeyexam.org. **Registration ends May 16th.** Once registered online, the owner/agent can locate a participating ophthalmologist in their area and contact that doctor to schedule an appointment, during the month of May. Appointment dates and times may vary depending on the facility and are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. The ACVO apologizes for any inconvenience our criteria for inclusion in the Service Dog Eye Exam Program may impose and we thank you for your interest.

The following non-profit organizations have supported to this event, the National Service Dog Eye Exam Day: American Animal Hospital Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, state veterinary medical associations in the U.S. and Canada, American Society of Veterinary Medical Association Executives, Veterinary Hospital Managers Association, Veterinary Ophthalmic Technicians Society, Guiding Eyes for the Blind, American Association of Detection Dogs, North American Police Dog Association, National Narcotic Detection Dog Association, Patriot Paws Service Dogs, Paws with a Cause, Department of Homeland Security and Service Dogs of America.

Regarding the qualifications for active working dogs or those in training:

The complimentary eye exam is provided to service dogs that have been formally trained (and have the corresponding paperwork) or have been certified by a nationally



recognized service dog program. The purpose for the criteria is twofold. First, ACVO is developing a database that can be used in the future to identify potential eye problems associated with the jobs that certain groups of service dogs perform. To make the data useful they must carefully set criteria for participants. Second, over the past several years ACVO has had some individuals claim their dog was a service dog just to take advantage of the eye exam. ACVO diplomates generously donate their time and resources to provide eye exams for service dogs. These resources are limited and if nonqualified dogs fill the limited time slots allotted, then a qualified dog may be excluded.

Be Happy!