

## FAQs for Press Coverage

### **Three Key Messages:**

1. The goal of the ACVO/Epicur National Service Animal Eye Exam Event is to provide as many free eye exams as possible to qualified Service Animals across the U.S., Canada, Hong Kong, Puerto Rico, and the U.K. throughout May. (Please refer to the event as the "ACVO/Epicur National Service Animal Eye Exam Event")
2. During the month of April, visit [www.ACVOEyeExam.org](http://www.ACVOEyeExam.org) to register your service animal for the event. (It's important that people know they MUST register online first, before calling a participating ophthalmologist.)
3. The American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists is proud to sponsor this wonderful event and hope to increase public awareness of veterinary ophthalmologists through philanthropic initiatives such as the National Service Animal Eye Exam Event.

For image or interview requests, please contact the ACVO Service Animal office at [serviceanimal@acvo.org](mailto:serviceanimal@acvo.org).

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **Q: What are the warning signs an animal may have an eye sight problem?**

A: While we receive some signs of impending problems, many things can be identified before they become unmanageable. At times you might notice your pet bumping into things when outside of their home, or sometimes squinting and rubbing of eyes. Redness. Cloudiness. But many times there are no external warning signs that a problem is developing internally.

#### **Q: What should an owner do if they think their animal has an eye sight problem?**

A: Initially they should speak to their primary care veterinarian. Most primary care providers have a relationship with a veterinary ophthalmologist, and will refer a client if they do not feel they can make the diagnosis or prescribe appropriate therapy.

#### **Q: What does the eye exam consist of?**

A: A complete exam will not only evaluate the surface of the eye but the structures within the eye as well. We look for problems including: redness, squinting, cloudy corneas, retinal disease, early cataracts and other serious abnormalities. Early detection and treatment are vital to these working animals. For additional information on what to expect during the exam, view this [link](#).

#### **Q: How does someone who has a Service Animal participate in the event?**

A: Between April 1 and April 30, they need to register at [www.ACVOEyeExam.org](http://www.ACVOEyeExam.org). View this [link](#) to understand what to expect in the registration process. Appointment availability may be limited and is on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Q: What service animal groups are eligible to participate?**

A: View qualifications [here](#).

**Q: How many veterinary ophthalmologists are participating?**

A: More than 245 of the approximately 590 boarded Diplomates are participating in the 2024 event.

**Q: How many veterinary ophthalmologists are boarded in the United States?**

A: There are approximately 500 ACVO Diplomates boarded in the United States. There are an additional 50 Diplomates who practice in other countries and another approximately 45 of whom are retired.

**Q: How many animals do you expect to provide exams to?**

A: The 2023 event saw nearly 5,260 Service Animals. We are hopeful that more exams will be provided this year now that we have brought the event back in full capacity.

**Q: How long has the event been running?**

A: 2024 is the 15th year of the event.

**Q: What happens if a service animal doesn't 'pass' their eye exam?**

A: This is not a pass fail exam, but one that looks for potential problems which may interfere with the animal's ability to accomplish their task currently or in the future. Many of the problems that have been diagnosed in service animals have been correctable and did not progress to take the animal out of service.

**Q: What type of feedback do you hear from the owners who have their animals seen?**

A: Mostly positive and appreciative. It is a learning experience for most owners or handlers also. One of our doctors diagnosed a seeing-eye dog (Qwest) with optic nerve tumor a couple years ago. Although they were not able to cure the problem, they did diagnose the condition, which gave the owner time to adjust to the idea of needing to get a new dog and to inform the agency providing the dog aware of the need for a dog in the future. Also by treating the dog we extended the service life of the dog at least a little while.