Adopting a Released Puppy FAQ

We hope that you’ll find the answers to a lot of your questions here, but please feel free to contact Jennifer McLain at jmclain@guidingeyes.org if you need any more specific information, and we’ll try to get back to you as quickly as possible.

**How old will a released puppy be?**
The puppies are typically between 8 and 10 weeks old at the time of placement.

**What breeds are available for adoption?**
Most of our dogs are Labrador retrievers (approximately 95%) and the most common color Labrador is black. There are occasionally German shepherds.

**Is the body type of your Labradors English or American?**
Our Labradors vary in body type from the English look to the equally attractive dogs with less bulk. The foundation stock and numerous ancestors had championship show and working titles. The most important title of more recent ancestors is that they are producers of guide dogs that serve the blind.

**Do these puppies come with papers?**
We are able to provide a pedigree and any health clearance information you request on the parents or ancestors. Our dogs come from some of the finest lines of guide dog breeding stock from around the world, but most from generations of Guiding Eyes’ careful selection. We no longer provide AKC registrations of our dogs, as many of the guide dog schools we cooperatively breed with do not register their dogs with this agency.

**Can I breed my adoptive puppy?**
No.
You are required to sign an agreement that you will have the pup neutered within 6 months of adoption. We require that a certificate of neutering be sent to us by the time the pup is 8 months old.

**How are released puppies matched to waiting families?**
Applicants complete a detailed questionnaire, helping us get to know their needs and personality. Using this information, we look for matches. Very active families that want dogs to run, hike, or hunt with them are matched with dogs with a suitable energy level for those activities. Families are also screened to make sure that the puppy will have proper care and attention.

**Do I get to pick a puppy out of a litter of pups?**
No.
We work very hard in matching you with a puppy based on your needs and desires. Historically, our adopters
have been very pleased with the matches we have made. If upon taking the puppy home, you are not pleased with your new family member, we will offer to take the puppy back and refund your adoption fee within 60 days.

**Can I come look at the puppy before I make my decision to adopt it?**
Yes. Once we have identified the puppy that we believe will be the best match for you, you’re welcome to visit, and even bring your veterinarian if you so choose.

**How much is the adoption fee for a released puppy?**
$2,000

**Will Guiding Eyes ship my dog by air to me?**
No.
Due largely to increased restrictions by the airlines, we no longer ship released dogs by air to adoption homes. If you are interested in adopting a released dog, you must reside within driving distance of our facility in Patterson, NY, near the Connecticut/New York border.

**Can I change the name of my adopted dog?**
Absolutely. Lots of adoptive families do. Please let us know for our record keeping.

**Can I adopt more than one dog?**
You can only adopt one dog at a time. Some families will place their names back on the list to adopt a second dog, but, to be fair to those who are waiting, we require that they go to the end of the list. This usually works out well, allowing a few years between dogs.

**Are female dogs easier to handle than males?**
Not necessarily. Since all released dogs eventually must be neutered, concentrate on temperament and personality traits rather than gender. If you restrict your application to female-only, your wait will usually be longer, as we have proportionately more applications for females than males and our availability of both sexes is equal.

**Why are puppies released from your program?**
Our released puppies have been evaluated and indicate from these early tests that they do not have the potential to become guide dogs. The most common reason for release is that we find them too sensitive to withstand the pressures of decision-making.

**Do you have a list of recommended trainers?**
We recommend that you check with your local veterinarian to find qualified trainers in your area. Good Dogs, Great Owners and My Smart Puppy by Brian Kilcommons, closely follow the philosophy of Guiding Eyes for the Blind.

**Do released dogs make good pets?**
Yes. We believe that they make excellent pets! They are well-bred, affectionate dogs who have been handled and socialized since birth by our staff and volunteers. The very traits that keep them from being guide dogs are the same ones which make them ideal pets.

**Are the parents guide dogs?**
No.
Before going into guide dog training, a dog must be neutered or spayed, therefore our breeding stock is determined before this time. However, dogs that become breeders for Guiding Eyes are an extremely elite class of dogs that would have certainly worked as a guide but were found to be so superior in temperament, intelligence, confidence, and health, they were chosen to carry on the progeny for Guiding Eyes.

**Do you recommend a choke collar?**
No, we do not recommend training or “choke” collars, as they are more difficult to use properly. We recommend head collars for people who have strong and self-willed dogs. There are two brands currently on the market:
Gentle Leader and Halti head collars. These are available from pet stores and mail order catalogs such as JB Wholesale.

A puppy, properly trained during the early months, will be responsive to your direction without the need of a training collar.

**How big will the dog be as an adult?**
The size of a Guiding Eyes dog when full grown can vary based on sex and genetics, but on average, a full-grown Labrador can weigh between 60 and 80 pounds and be between 21 and 26 inches tall when measured at the shoulder.

**Can I give my dogs treats?**
Absolutely! It's advisable, however, to limit treats to a small portion of the daily caloric intake. Treats are not balanced nutritionally and could add to the common problem of obesity, which shortens your dog's life span and results in numerous health problems.

**Are released dogs healthy?**
Our puppies come from generations of parents who have been selected for their excellent health and temperament. As a result, the incidence of hereditary problems in our dogs is much lower than the average dog population. All parents are screened to be free of hip, eye, heart, elbow, and other common health problems in the breed. Guiding Eyes veterinarians monitor our dogs' health from birth. At the time of adoption, all vaccines are up to date. We do request that you notify us if your dog does develop any hereditary illnesses so that we can use that information to continue making the right decisions in breeding management.

**Can my vet check out the pup before I adopt it?**
Yes.
You are welcome to have your vet come with you for the placement or, as is more commonly done, schedule an appointment with your veterinarian for an exam. In addition, our veterinary staff has examined every puppy and deemed your puppy healthy. If there are any concerns or questions you or your veterinarian have about your puppy, our veterinary staff will be happy to answer your questions.

How far can I walk my new puppy without worrying about its level of immunization prior to 12 weeks?
Prior to the pup’s 12 week vaccinations, it is best to keep the puppy away from areas traveled by dogs such as parks, pet stores, veterinary offices, and even your neighborhood. You can exercise and socialize your pup to new experiences, but, if you are unsure if stray or other potentially unhealthy or unvaccinated dogs may have had access to the area, it is best to avoid it entirely.

**Can I have the puppy around my friend’s dog?**
You can expose your pup to other dogs you know provided they are properly vaccinated and friendly. Make sure that you are always there to properly monitor play. Rough play with an older dog can result in serious injury to the smaller puppy.

**Are released puppies housebroken?**
No, puppies released from Guiding Eyes are not housebroken.

**What should I put in the crate for bedding?**
A towel or blanket may be placed in the crate, but check every day to make sure it is dry and not chewed. If evidence of wetting or chewing is found, then it's best if the crate has no bedding until pup is older. Puppies tend to chew and ingest everything, which could cause intestinal obstructions and serious illness.

**What size crate should I get?**
Ideally, you would have two crates – a Vari Kennel 200 or medium size from adoption through age 4 months, then once housebreaking is complete, a larger, permanent crate model Vari Kennel 500

A guideline is that the crate size should be large enough for the pup to lay down comfortably but not big enough that he or she has room to eliminate in one corner and sleep in another. If you do not want to buy a bigger crate
later, you can purchase a crate that is large enough for your pup when full grown and place a divider in the crate while the pup is house-trained. Instead of the Vari Kennel, you can purchase a 36 x 24 x 42 inch wire crate with a divider (for example, the Midwest Lifestyle 1636DD Kennel).

A good source of mail order dog equipment is JB Wholesale.

**How long can the puppy be in the crate?**

At 8 to 20 weeks of age, the pup needs to be let out a minimum of every 2 hours.

Beginning at 20 weeks, build up to 3 and 4 hours until the dog is about 8 months old. Young puppies need to eliminate much more frequently than older dogs. Initially you should plan on letting the puppy out every hour until it learns where to eliminate, then decrease the frequency to every 2 hours. Take note as to when the pup goes.

Until house-training is established, you should feed the pup at the same time each day and be home to let the pup out to eliminate around the same time each day. It is also important to make sure that the puppy has had a chance to exercise before being placed in the crate for long periods of time.

**What size collar should I get?**

You will need a puppy sized “buckle” collar. If you want a collar that will grow with your puppy for a while, you can purchase a ¾-inch width, 9-to-14-inch long adjustable collar. Nylon web collars are the most common and durable.