



Information for veterinary practices

Caring for our dogs and their owners



The veterinary practices throughout the country that care for Guide Dogs' working guide dogs, puppies, breeding stock and retired dogs are essential to the care of our 8,000+ dogs. We hope you find this reference to our working practices useful.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your good will and support working with Guide Dogs and our clients.

Assisting a visually impaired client in your practice

Many guide dog owners have some residual vision, but not enough to get around safely without a dog or other mobility aid. It is perfectly acceptable to ask how much vision a person has, as this will affect the amount and type of assistance they require. Individual guide dog owners may require different levels of assistance, so always ask what they would like.

If possible, have one of your reception staff or nurses greet the guide dog owner when they arrive. Assistance to find a seat in the waiting room, details of how long they may need to wait and who or what else is in the waiting room, will help the guide dog owners to orientate themselves and feel comfortable.

When guiding a visually impaired person let them take your left arm so you are on the opposite side to the dog.

It is important to identify yourself and make sure the person knows that you are addressing them. Let them know when you are leaving a room and when you return. When examining and treating the dog, let the owner know what you are doing.

If the owner is required to administer treatment at home, please ensure they are shown how to do so. All clients will have been taught how to give tablets, liquid medication, ear treatment etc. but they may not have practiced for some time and may appreciate a refresher.

If you would like more information on assisting visually impaired clients in your practice please use this link <http://inpractice.bmj.com/content/36/9/435.full> or contact your local Guide Dogs Mobility Team. Information can be provided in leaflet format or a practical training session.

Routine health checks

Guide Dogs request all their working guide dogs undergo 6 monthly health checks with a veterinary surgeon. The following wording is taken from the BVA Website;

"Since 1958 it has been BVA policy to recommend that all members give twice yearly examinations, free of charge, to working guide dogs. For working guide dogs over nine years of age, Guide Dogs recommends that examinations are undertaken more regularly than 6 months"

http://www.bva.co.uk/activity_and_advice/Assistancedogs.aspx

Veterinary and dog care policies

All of Guide Dogs' veterinary and dog care policies are drawn up under the guidance of our chief veterinary consultant Professor Gary England, centre veterinary advisors and various recognised specialists who work closely with the charity. These reflect the needs of the charity and our specialised working dogs and may or may not always reflect the general practices of the veterinary profession.

We appreciate the co-operation and good working relationships we have with all the veterinary practices who offer a service to Guide Dogs. If you would like to discuss any of our policies or working practices we ask that you contact your local Dog Care and Welfare Advisor.

Vaccination

Early vaccination of our puppies is important to achieve the sound behaviour of a working guide dog. Before being placed with puppy walkers, all guide dog pups receive an early vaccination with Eurican DHPPi and Lepto at six weeks of age. This vaccine does not form part of their primary vaccination course. The puppy walker is then asked to present the puppy to their veterinary surgeon for their primary vaccination course starting at twelve weeks, with the second component being given at sixteen weeks.

With adult dogs, veterinary surgeons are requested to give a booster vaccination at their discretion in order to meet the general protection requirements. This normally takes the form of an annual booster vaccination. Exception: brood bitches should be given their annual booster close to the time of their non mating season.

Vaccine manufacturers supply vaccines free of charge to guide dog stock, and will give the veterinary surgeon a replacement for each vaccine used on receipt of a completed vaccine reclaim card.

Worming

All adult dogs should be treated with a broad spectrum worming product at least six monthly from maturity. Preferred products include Drontal Plus, Veloxa and Milbemax.

Brood bitches should be treated during each non mating season with a broad spectrum product as above. They are also treated with Panacur approximately 1 week before mating. Under NO circumstances should a pregnant bitch be treated with worming products. Nursing brood bitches are treated with Drontal Plus at two and five weeks post whelping. Guide Dog puppies are treated with Drontal Puppy Suspension at 2 and 5 weeks of age.

Each puppy will also be supplied with sufficient Veloxa to enable the Puppy Walker to treat them at 6 and 12 months of age.

These products are supplied by the Centre Veterinary Advisor at the National Breeding Centre and within guidelines agreed by the VMD.

Manufacturers of Drontal Plus and Milbemax worming products have agreed to provide worming products at a reduced cost to Guide Dogs. Reclaim forms are available from Guide Dogs and the individual manufacturers to enable worming products to be supplied free of charge/at a reduced cost to clients.

Manufacturers will replace the worming product used, to the veterinary surgeon, on receipt of the reclaim paperwork.

Random faecal screening is carried out by Guide Dogs staff for puppies, breeding stock and dogs within the training programme to ensure current worming practices are effective.

Flea and tick Control

All guide dog stock should receive preventative treatment against fleas and ticks as per the manufacturer's recommendation, and according to local risk requirement (e.g. high flea risk).

In cases of flea infestation, flea allergy or other dermatological problems an environmental treatment should also be used.

Where treatment for other ectoparasites is required, this should be on the recommendation of the veterinary surgeon and based on the need to treat a specific parasite.

Each puppy is also supplied with sufficient Nexgard Spectra to enable the Puppy Walker to treat them once a month until they start their training. These products are supplied by the Centre Veterinary Advisor at the National Breeding Centre and within guidelines agreed by the VMD.

It is expected that in any household where there is guide dog stock, other dogs and cats will be treated regularly for fleas using an appropriate veterinary regime. This would be at the expense of the owner.

Preventative ectoparasite treatment for guide dogs travelling abroad

Dependent upon the destination, veterinary advice should be sought and where necessary preventative/repellent tick, sandfly and mosquito treatment should be given.

Neutering

With the exception of breeding stock, all Guide Dogs stock are neutered. Male puppies are castrated during their puppy walking phase at approximately 8 to 9 months of age. Bitches are spayed after their first season. At present we request that all of our bitches are neutered via a midline ovariohysterectomy. We are aware that other procedures are available including laparoscopic surgery and we review our policy decision annually. Our decision on the type of procedure undertaken takes account of potential impacts of the various procedures on temperament and health, and must fit with our national research into the effect of neutering. Currently we are investigating the effect of pre-pubertal neutering (which is being undertaken on certain animals at specific centres); we therefore require consistent protocols are undertaken for the remaining animals.

Feeding

Guide Dogs use diets which provide optimum nutrition for all life stages and meet the needs of our stock. Diets are selected from the Royal Canin Professional range, Royal Canin has agreed to supply food directly to clients and volunteers. All dogs are fed diets from the identified range according to their individual need. In the first instance dogs will be fed on a life stage diet, if it is necessary for the dogs' diet to be changed please contact the Dog Care and Welfare Advisor responsible for the dog before doing so. This will allow us to ensure a diet from our chosen supplier is suitable and ensure a direct supply is authorised.

Veterinary diets

Where it has been recognised that a veterinary diet is required, arrangements have been made with Royal Canin to enable the charity to keep the costs to a minimum. Royal Canin will deliver veterinary diets directly to our clients at a discounted rate to Guide Dogs. If a veterinary diet is required please contact the Dog Care and Welfare Advisor responsible for the dog who will arrange the authorisation form to be completed.

Supply of non-prescription veterinary products/neutraceuticals

Guide Dogs have been able to secure national arrangements with some veterinary pharmaceutical companies. This enables us to supply nutraceuticals and other non-prescription products directly from the local centre at concessionary prices. We would therefore request that if any guide dogs stock treated at your practice requires, or is already supplied with these products, we are able to arrange to supply it directly to the client or volunteer as directed by you. For further information please contact your local Dog Care and Welfare Advisor.

In securing these concessionary arrangements, Guide Dogs is better placed to control its expenditure on veterinary costs, whilst ensuring our stock receives the most appropriate treatments.

Laboratory work

Batt Lab and Finn Pathologists offer discounted services for all Guide Dogs stock, for guide dog submission forms please contact your Dog Care and Welfare Advisor or the laboratories directly.

Idexx laboratories offer free tests for **working** guide dogs at their external laboratories. To be eligible for the free tests the submitting veterinary surgeon needs to use a guide dogs submission form, these can be supplied by your Dog Care and Welfare Advisor.

Fees for the above 3 laboratories are invoiced directly to Guide Dogs along with the results; please complete your contact details on the submission form to receive a copy of results.

Veterinary referrals

Guide Dogs work closely with a range of veterinary specialists and referral centres. These identified specialists are very familiar with the work of the charity, our dog population and the specific role our dogs undertake. For this reason we ask that should you wish to refer one of our dogs, this is discussed with your local Dog Care and Welfare Advisor first.

We monitor the health of our population as a whole and regularly fund research into diseases affecting our stock, and as a result we may have a preferred specialist who will see the case as a priority and often take it on without Guide Dogs incurring additional costs.

For the same reason, we may occasionally request a referral or samples/radiographs from one of our dogs in your care as part of these research/monitoring projects. This in no way reflects on the quality of your treatment or investigation, but enables those researching and monitoring the health issues of our population to obtain as much information as possible. The information is used to govern future working practices and fed into our breeding programme. Obviously if such a referral or procedure is impractical or would in any way compromise the welfare of the individual dog, we are happy to be guided by the veterinary surgeon as the person responsible for the case.

Fireworks

Fireworks can be a problem for guide dogs and their visually impaired owners. Such a problem in fact, that each year a number of guide dogs have to be retrained or even retired early because of the stress caused by fireworks. Traditionally, sedatives and tranquillisers were the prescribed drug of choice. Whilst these drugs remove the symptoms of fear that the owners find distressing, the use of such drugs may have implications for the dog's welfare and the working ability of the guide dog. Guide Dogs therefore, do not generally recommend the use of sedatives or tranquillisers on their stock for the treatment of firework or noise phobias.

We would like to work with veterinary surgeons to identify those dogs with over-awareness to fireworks and deal with the behavioural side of the issue. Our staff are familiar with behaviour modifying programmes, desensitisation CDs, pheromone therapy and complementary therapies. They also have a basic understanding of how some prescription therapies can be used in conjunction with behaviour modification. Some of the non-prescription products can be supplied directly from the local centre at concessionary prices. For further information please contact your local Dog Care and Welfare Advisor.

Guide dog travel abroad

Some guide dog owners may request that their dog is prepared for a pet passport. A small number of guide dog owners do travel abroad for work or live abroad for some time of the year.

The cost of the preparation for the passport is covered by the guide dog owner, not Guide Dogs. Guide Dogs have prepared a document for guide dogs owners to inform them of the basics of the process. It is recommended that they discuss preventative health treatment, etc. with their own veterinary surgeon before travelling.

We also ask that the guide dog owner discusses their intention to take their dog abroad with Guide Dogs staff before embarking upon it.

Elderly dogs

It is normally recommended that working dogs over nine years of age are examined by a veterinary surgeon more regularly than every 6 months.

The decision to retire a dog from work is taken jointly by the guide dog owner and Guide Dogs. We welcome any information given to us by the local veterinary surgeon which may help us to plan for the retirement of a dog and assist us in identifying when a dog needs to retire.

In many cases, a retired guide dog will be kept by the guide dog owner so you may be asked to continue to care for the retired dog as well as the owners replacement.

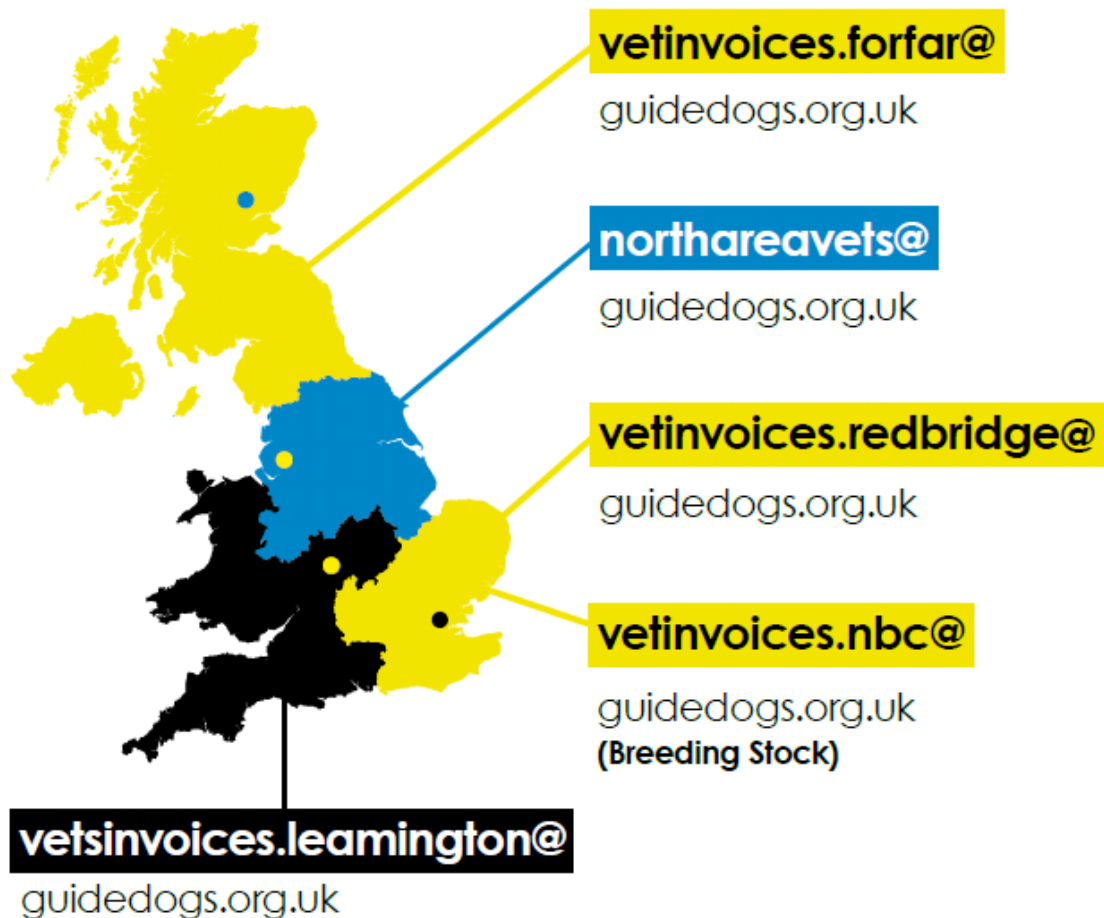
Health records

At the time of treating one of our dogs you may be asked to complete a health record card or book. This is the dog's personal record of veterinary treatment. **If you have treated one of our dogs please email, fax or post a printed copy of your clinical notes** to the local Dog Care and Welfare Advisor. This enables us to keep

accurate computer records for our dogs for all treatments and investigations carried out. This information is important to us as it may affect decisions regarding future policies and our breeding programme. Your Dog Care and Welfare Advisor may request further information on occasions, and documents such as the veterinary surgeons notes and investigation results may be requested.

Payment of veterinary accounts

Ideally, veterinary invoices should be forwarded to Guide Dogs along with a copy of the clinical history to facilitate prompt payment. Wherever possible please email invoices and accompanying clinical history to the relevant email address below;



Where a guide dog owner wishes to settle their own account we would still need to receive the clinical history to enable us to maintain our own records. We request that you contact your local Dog Care and Welfare Advisor before proceeding with any non-routine procedures i.e. those requiring a general anaesthetic, radiographs, laboratory investigation or surgery – other than in an emergency situation. This is for a number of reasons e.g. to allow a discussion of the ability of the client to care for the dog post operatively, referral to a specific specialist, the impact on the dogs work, cost etc.

Value Added Tax and dog medicines purchased by Guide Dogs: a briefing note for vets

The VAT Regulations

VAT on dog medicines is usually charged at the standard rate. However, because Guide Dogs is a charity involved directly with animal welfare (in order to provide good guide dogs), we have special permission from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) that allows us to buy medicinal products at 0 per cent VAT for medicines prescribed to dogs retained under the charity's ownership i.e. breeding stock, puppies and dogs in training. Please contact your local Dog Care and Welfare Advisor if you need further advice on which dogs you treat fall under direct Guide Dogs ownership. The following is the ruling given by HMRC:

"The position is that this relief is normally intended for those charities, for example the RSPCA and PDSA, that give particular attention to the wellbeing of animals that may have been neglected or are in need of some form of specialist attention. Where animals are being looked after or trained in some way it is expected that there would normally be an element of care. After all, charities are not likely to deliberately mistreat animals. However, because of the very specialised nature of the training of guide dogs and the very great emphasis given to care to ensure they perform well, I am pleased to confirm that supplies of medicinal products to the charity can be zero-rated under item 9 of Group 16 of Schedule 5 to the VAT Act 1983". (This section has subsequently been updated to item 9/10 of Zero Rate Group 15 the Value Added Tax Act 1994)

How to treat the supplies on the VAT return

Zero-rated VAT means that the vet should include the sales as usual in their VAT return (but with Zero VAT on it), and they can therefore still reclaim all their VAT costs from HMRC as usual. As a charity Guide Dogs cannot reclaim any VAT costs on items to do with our charitable work, as this is associated with income from donations which is outside the scope of VAT. This means that any VAT charged to us at the standard rate is a real cost we bear and by buying medicines at zero-rate VAT, we make a real saving of the VAT amount.

Refund procedures

Officially, under HMRC rules, a company can go back to a supplier and reclaim VAT on any invoices up to three years old where VAT has been wrongly charged. Reclaims would be made to each original supplier, and not directly with HMRC. The vet practice would pay the VAT incorrectly charged back to Guide Dogs and invoice it as a VAT refund. In practice, a decision about whether or not to claim a refund on previous supplies of medicinal products will depend on a pragmatic assessment of the cost of administration to identify and process such refunds compared to the amount of VAT due for refund. Please note, where VAT has been incorrectly shown on an invoice a VAT credit note needs to be raised or the invoice needs to be replaced in full, rather than the VAT simply being crossed off.

While Guide Dogs can correctly pay just the net value of these medicines, the supplier will still be liable to pay VAT to HMRC unless the necessary VAT credit note has been raised. Please contact your local Dog Care and Welfare Advisor for more details.

Guide Dog Training Schools

Guide Dog Training School Gibfield Park Avenue Atherton MANCHESTER Lancashire M46 0SU Reception: 0845 372 7403	Guide Dog Training School Dean Way Orchardbank Business Park FORFAR Angus DD8 1WG Reception: 0845 372 7408
Guide Dog Training School Edmondscote Manor Warwick New Road LEAMINGTON SPA Warwickshire CV32 6AH Reception: 0845 372 7417	Guide Dog Training School Findlay House Manor Road WOODFORD GREEN Essex IG8 8ER Reception: 0845 372 7421