

WHAT IS SARDS?

SARDS (Sudden Acquired Retinal Degeneration Syndrome) is a condition that causes sudden and irreversible blindness in dogs. It affects the retina, the part of the eye that processes light and vision.

- Most dogs lose their vision completely and suddenly
- Unfortunately, there is no known cure or proven treatment to restore vision
- Despite the diagnosis, dogs can adapt extremely well and live full, happy lives

We understand how alarming it can be when your pet has suddenly gone blind. We are here to help you understand SARDS, what it means for your pet, and how you can help them adjust to this new way of life.



COMMON SIGNS OF SARDS

- Bumping into furniture or walls
- Difficulty finding treats, toys, or other objects
- Reluctance to go outside, up and down stairs, or walk in unfamiliar places
- Sudden behavior changes (confusion, anxiety)

Some pets also have changes in appetite, thirst, or weight associated with blindness—signs which often go away after SARDS is established.

HOW IS SARDS DIAGNOSED?

SARDS is typically diagnosed through:

- A complete eye exam by a veterinary ophthalmologist
- A normal-appearing eye, including the retina, despite blindness
- An electroretinogram (ERG), a test that measures retinal function. Pets with SARDS have a flat ERG—meaning the retina is no longer working and is unable to send signals to the brain
- Bloodwork to rule out systemic or metabolic diseases may be recommended



LIFE AFTER SARDS: HELPING YOUR DOG ADJUST

The good news: with time, most pets adjust incredibly well to their vision loss.

Here's how you can help them thrive:

- Keep furniture and routine in place
- Block off stairs or access to pools/waterways
- Use mats or textured rugs to mark important areas
- Talk to your dog often so they know where you are
- Use consistent scent cues (lavender, vanilla, essential oils) at key locations
- Give them time, patience, and lots of encouragement

Dogs use their hearing, smell, and memory far more than we do. With some time and support, many dogs return to playing, walking, and exploring similar to before their SARDS diagnosis.

For more information on caring for blind dogs, visit BlindTails.com and visit our Resources page for more tips