



# Guide Dogs for the Blind

## Beyond Puppy Raising

### **RECALL**

Generally, puppies are recalled to campus for formal training and breeding evaluation between 13-18 months; however, the age of recall will vary depending on a variety of factors. Puppy raisers should anticipate receiving notification that a puppy is being recalled any time after 13 months of age.

About two weeks prior to the recall date, the puppy raiser will receive an email from GDB stating that the dog is being recalled. Those raisers living near one of the GDB campuses will make arrangements to transport their dogs to campus. For dogs farther away from campus, GDB staff will make arrangements for dogs to ride the puppy truck or fly. Puppy raisers that have difficulty meeting the scheduled pick-up time, date, or place should call their leader immediately.

Upon notification of recall, puppy raisers will ensure that all veterinary records for the dogs (including alter certificate and vaccination records) are submitted to the GDB vet clinic; these procedures are detailed in the e-mail sent to puppy raisers prior to recall. This streamlines the process for getting dogs settled into the kennel and scheduled for their vet check-in. It also prevents the need to administer unnecessary vaccines.

### **Items That Need To Be Returned With The Puppy**

- Puppy collar and head collar
- Puppy coats (return to club leader)
- A completed Fun Things About My Puppy form - raisers are encouraged to be informative and positive in the information provided; a link to an online version of this form is included in the recall e-mail sent to raisers
- Veterinary records not yet submitted to GDB
- Any unused heartworm preventative
- Any unused flea or tick preventative

### **ON CAMPUS**

Once on campus, GDB staff settles each dog into the kennel with the rest of the dogs arriving for training and breeder evaluation. Within a few days, most dogs will have a roommate. This section details the processes for evaluating and selecting both altered dogs for the training program and intact dogs for the breeding program.

### **Medical Examinations**

During the first week on campus, all dogs will have their initial health screenings that include:

- Orthopedic x-rays and exams
- A formal in-for-training physical by a GDB veterinarian
- An eye exam by a veterinary ophthalmology specialist
- An accurate weight
- Any vaccinations needed

If a dog does not clear any of the above exams, it may result in a career change or being removed from consideration as a breeder. For information regarding common medical career change reasons, see Common Medical Career Change Conditions in the Forms and Resources section.

## **TRAINING FOR ALTERED DOGS**

Dogs that have already been altered (spayed or neutered) are recalled for guide training. Those dogs that pass all the initial health exams are assigned to an instructor with a training string. A string is a group of dogs all trained by one team of instructors. These dogs then begin the training program and are given systematic evaluations as they progress through the eight training phases.

Each dog's most recent phase number is accessible on the Forms page of the website. Information is updated each week on Thursday (see GDB Training Phases below).

Throughout training each dog is continually evaluated by training and veterinary staff. If a problem (physical, temperament, behavior or cosmetic) arises that is evaluated as being chronic, reoccurring and/or impossible to correct, the dog will be dropped from the program. It is important to understand that GDB's high standards are necessary to ensure the safety of a partner who is blind and the long-term health and well-being of the dog.

Puppy raisers often want to share the progress of their dogs in training and they are encouraged to do so. Because the full description of the training phases is a copyrighted document, GDB asks its raisers to share the more abbreviated version that follow.

### **GDB TRAINING PHASES**

The GDB training program is designed to maximize a dog's potential for success. Each dog is taken through the phases with the end goal of having all of the dogs in a string ready for class at the same time. There are eight phases of training through which the dogs progress during their training cycle.

#### **Phase 0**

Health screenings (x-rays/eyes); agility; kennel enrichment; campus walks, community run intros

#### **Phase 1**

Load clicker, tethering / collar response; food reward and refusal intros; obstacle course; 1st up-curb exercise; "over here"; agility; back-up chute; harness exposure; treadmill; off leash recall; begin formal obedience and pattern training

#### **Phase 2**

Pattern training continues; 2nd up-curb exercise; distraction route in town; responsible lead exercise; food protocol continues

#### **Phase 3**

3rd up-curb exercise; dog boot intros; preliminary obedience & guide work testing (instructor under blindfold)

#### **Phase 4**

Building work begins; intelligent disobedience and overhead introduction; traffic conditioning; natural traffic checks begin

#### **Phase 5**

Natural traffic checks continue; formal traffic training; total barricades; city routes; escalator intros; city bus route

#### **Phase 6**

City routes continue; sidewalkless; platform training; light rail route; begin leash relieving

#### **Phase 7**

Advanced overhead training; more complex routes

#### **Phase 8 - Finishing/Maintenance Routes; Class Preparation**

Final tests – a blindfolded GDB instructor tests the dog in the following: obedience, guide work, work inside buildings and final traffic. Dogs that pass these tests are deemed "class ready." Other work: finishing routes; pre class phone meetings with clients; hand & chair targeting intros; pole targeting on route; dormitory building exposure; pre-class physicals; pre-class meeting: instructor team, supervisor, dorm manager, and nurses.

For a more comprehensive description of each of the eight phases of training, refer to the Training Phase Descriptions in the Forms and Resources section.

Dogs that complete the training phases are assigned to a class. Class assignment occurs when the instructor feels that a dog has the qualities needed by a particular person who is in class.

## **CLASS**

By the time the dogs finish their final exams in Phase 8, clients have already been scheduled to arrive for the next class. Instructors conduct pre-class phone meetings to begin the matching process between client and dog. Matches are finalized once students arrive at campus and class training has begun. To make the best matches possible, GDB has more class ready dogs than clients. This means that there are always a handful of dogs remaining for placement in a future class. These dogs continue in training with the next group of instructors and dogs.

There are different class-training program options available to clients. GDB offers two week classes for in-residence client training. On occasion, for either health or other compelling personal reasons, some clients do best with training in their own home area. In these instances, the client does not train at a GDB campus. This is called an in-home training. Most in-home training clients do not participate in a formal graduation ceremony, unless they live close to one of the GDB campuses and are able to attend. For those clients unable to attend a ceremony, see the information in the Graduation section below for special arrangements afforded to raisers whose dogs are trained in-home.

Depending on whether they are training in California or Oregon, clients begin training with their prospective guide dogs in residential areas of San Rafael or Gresham, respectively, and transition to routes in San Francisco or Portland. The new teams encounter many different situations together: public transportation (cars, city buses, subway systems, and ferries), heavy traffic, construction, escalators, areas with no sidewalks, etc.

## **GRADUATION**

When the pups graduate as guides, raisers are invited to the graduation ceremonies to help celebrate the life-changing partnerships they helped create. If raisers plan to fly to attend a graduation ceremony, GDB recommends purchasing refundable airfare, in case something happens to cause the dog to be career changed, passed back or taken out of class at the last moment. On graduation day, puppy raisers arrive and receive a staff presentation about each dog's experience in training, an overview of the ceremony and other activities taking place that morning. Following this presentation, each raiser will have an opportunity to meet with the client who has been paired with the dog they raised. The raiser(s) and guide dog team then spend time together until the ceremony begins. During the ceremony, after the client speaks, the raiser has an opportunity to share a few words about their experience raising the dog. Raisers are sent a DVD of the graduation as a keepsake.

For in-home clients unable to attend a graduation, raisers may have the opportunity to visit the dog they raised on campus before it leaves for training. The in-home instructor takes photos of the working team for the raiser's keepsake. Those raisers whose dogs have been matched with clients who receive in-home training are welcome to attend graduation. Their name, the dog's name and the client's name are mentioned during the program even though the team is not present. If the raiser chooses to attend graduation, he or she also has an opportunity to make a statement at the microphone when introduced. With their consent, a statement composed by the client may also be read at the same time. Also with the client's consent, a phone call can be arranged between the raiser and graduate.

### **Tips for a Relaxing and Enjoyable Graduation**

- Puppy raisers will receive information about the opportunity to contact the student on a specific day and time prior to graduation; puppy raisers are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to break the ice and speak to the student prior to meeting at graduation.
- Address the graduate first (not the dog).
- Clients may offer the leash to the raiser to visit with the dog for a few minutes. Be respectful of the team's relationship and hand the leash back within a few minutes.

- When visiting with the dog, stay gentle and calm to minimize the dog's excitement. The dog is working on this day. Expect and encourage him to behave as he would in a working situation involving a crowd.
- Indicate an open seat to the client, and ask them about their class experience.
- Feel free to share positive and/or humorous stories about the dog's puppyhood. Keep in mind that the student has only begun to develop their trust and confidence in their new guide. While sharing normal puppy "challenges" with the student is fine, try not to focus on any negative subjects about raising their dog.
- Inquire about the student's lifestyle, plans or hobbies/career. Keep in mind, the client may not want to share.
- Please do not offer any training advice, even if asked.
- When it is time for the team and raiser to be recognized, it is slightly different on the two campuses:
- California: the client is given the choice to either work the dog to the front of the room, or to have the raiser act as their human guide. If needed, raisers will be instructed on how to be a human guide prior to the ceremony in case that is the option that the client chooses
- Oregon: the instructors of the class will be human guides due to the more complex approach to the stage including a longer distance and navigation of stairs
- There is no obligation to share personal information or to ensure communication going forward between the client and the puppy raiser(s). Puppy raisers are sent the client's contact information in the email announcement informing them of the graduation. Please respect any privacy wishes that the client may express.

## **BREEDER EVALUATION FOR INTACT DOGS**

Upon recall to a GDB campus, all mature puppies that have not yet been altered will be evaluated for breeding. The breeding evaluation process can take up to two months (or longer, depending on how quickly test results are received). Any dogs on the breeding evaluation list that have mild health or temperament issues that preclude them from being breeding stock may still be eligible for training; if so, they are then neutered or spayed and prepared for a training string.

Over the years, through the judicious inclusion and generous donation of many fine specimens from outside breeders, Guide Dogs for the Blind has been able to establish an excellent breeding colony of dogs especially suited to the program. At this time, 95 percent of all dogs produced for the program are bred from GDB's own breeding stock. The other 5 percent consist of dogs that are the result of co-breedings with other guide and service dog organizations as well as an occasional dog from an outside breeder. These breedings through outside or co-bred sources enable GDB to diversify its gene pool and to continue to improve its colony of breeding animals.

Today, the breeding colony consists of approximately 200 active breeders and is comprised of approximately 80 percent Labrador Retrievers, 10 percent Golden Retrievers and 10 percent Labrador and Golden cross breeds.

## **PHASES OF BREEDER EVALUATION**

Breeding stock selection is based on the results of estimated breeding value calculations, behavior assessments, health screenings, and the needs of the colony in terms of pedigree and temperament type. The dogs that have met the highest physical and temperamental standards are considered for inclusion in the colony. A thorough review of the individual dog's health and temperament history and those of its littermates, as well as its sire and dam's previous production complete the selection process.

Every raiser of a new breeding stock dog is invited to attend a graduation ceremony at the San Rafael campus to formally present the dog they raised and be recognized by GDB for their hard work and tremendous contribution. Raisers of male and female breeders are notified via email each time the breeder sires or whelps a litter and are invited to submit names for the puppies. Raisers also have the opportunity to schedule puppy visits with each new litter.

### **Phase A: Arrival Period**

Dogs are introduced to the GDB kennels, campus walks and begin breeder assessment. Each dog is assigned to an individual Canine Welfare Training Technician (CWTT) for specialized attention and training

during the breeder evaluation process. CWTTs report weekly directly to the breeding department staff on the health and wellbeing of each breeder evaluation dog.

### **Phase B: Initial Health Screening and Kennel Socialization**

During this important transitional period, each dog receives a preliminary physical exam, performed by a Canine Welfare Training Technician. The CWTT thoroughly inspects each dog from head to tail and checks the nose, teeth, eyes, ears, coat, skin and feet. Any ailments, abnormalities or concerns are noted and brought to the attention of GDB's veterinary staff. Most recalled dogs are in excellent condition, although some may require medication for minor ailments such as an ear or eye infection. During the first week on campus, dogs receive the following:

- Orthopedic x-rays and exams
- A formal in-for-training physical by a GDB veterinarian
- An eye exam by a veterinary ophthalmology specialist
- An accurate weight
- Any vaccinations needed

### **Activities throughout all phases**

- Walks on campus and playtime in an enclosed grass paddock
- Doubling kennelmates that play well together
- Daily grooming
- Medication administration, as needed
- Human and dog interactive play or cuddle sessions
- Introduction to community run playtime
- Kennel enrichment activities

Kennel enrichment is anything that stimulates the senses and puts the dogs at ease in a kennel environment. The primary focus of the Canine Welfare Training Technicians (CWTTs) is to care for and provide kennel enrichment for the dogs. Some enrichment activities take place daily for every dog, other activities are done intermittently. Enrichment activities are many, including:

- Bones and chewable toys; food stuffed Kongs and ice cubes
- Hanging toys with or without food in them
- Plush and squeaky toys – closely monitored (not recommended for raisers or clients)
- Interactive toys (rings, etc.)
- Baby pools filled with water or a toy and/or playground equipment
- Scents: vanilla, peppermint, anise, lemon, almond, etc sprayed in the kennel
- Bubbles, mirrors, wind catchers, sound machines, music
- T-Touch, Pilates, massage and Reiki
- Behavior training for dogs that need additional socialization, or for career change dogs or breeder dogs awaiting placement
- Exercise: walks, treadmill, enclosed grass paddocks
- Cuddle time

The Breeding Manager carefully reviews the results from initial health screens and begins making decisions to alter during this phase. Because breeder dogs affect many future generations of potential guide dogs, health criteria for breeding stock dogs can be stricter than the criteria for a dog to enter formal guide dog training. Thus, while a dog may not meet the criteria for breeding they may still qualify to enter formal training.

### **Phase C: Cardiology, Temperament and Pedigree Analysis**

Dogs under breeder evaluation receive an echocardiogram performed by a board certified canine cardiologist. This typically takes place the second week after recall. Dogs with minor heart abnormalities may be excluded from breeding due to the potential to produce more severe defects in their offspring. Minor abnormalities which do not affect the individual dog's health and ability to work will not prevent that dog from entering formal training.

An in town temperament assessment walk is performed during this phase and staff provide a recommendation to the Breeding Manager based on manageability, confidence, temperament, willingness, and kennel adjustment

GDB works with a population geneticist at the University of California, Davis to calculate Estimated Breeding Values or EBVs. EBVs describe the relative genetic value of each member of a breeding population. EBVs are built on quantitative data (that which can be measured by a number). EBV profiles are commonly used in livestock in reference to specific, measurable traits and only recently used with companion animals.

Preliminary decisions to include dogs in the breeding colony take place during this phase. CFRs are notified of the preliminary decision and raisers will also receive a communication directly from the breeding department staff. At this time, raisers who live within a 75 mile radius of the San Rafael campus who are interested in becoming the dog's custodial home are invited to apply.

#### **Phase D: Final Health Screening**

Dogs selected for breeding undergo a final round of health clearances. An additional set of x-rays are taken to examine shoulders and hocks for potential inherited orthopedic diseases. Another type of hip evaluation takes place called PennHIP (an acronym for "University of Pennsylvania Hip Improvement Program"). This is a diagnostic technique for evaluating the hips of dogs for laxity (looseness) which can cause degenerative joint disease. The PennHIP assessment consists of three radiographs taken from different angles, which are then analyzed in order to make an assessment.

Depending on breed and gender, specific DNA tests may also be used to further assess an individual dog. Once all tests results are received and evaluated the final decision is made for breeding selection and dogs are ready for placement into a custodial home.

#### **Phase E: Placement**

Breeding department staff matches breeder dogs to custodian families in the same manner that instructors match guide dogs with handlers who are visually impaired. Staff get to know potential custodians during the application process and their goal is to create a lifelong placement. Custodians must reside within a 50-mile radius of the San Rafael campus. Puppy raisers of breeders are given special consideration to serve as the breeder custodian if they live within a 75-mile radius of San Rafael and can meet all other custodial requirements. Raisers must complete the same process as all potential custodians due to differences in volunteer responsibilities and commitments from the puppy raising program.

GDB carefully reviews and thoroughly screens each potential custodial family's application and home environment in order to ensure comfortable, safe and secure homes for these valuable breeding stock dogs. Applicants are required to complete an on-campus dog management class that covers behavior, health care, grooming, and dog handling. The ultimate goal is to obtain the best possible home for each individual dog being placed.

Once placed, breeding stock dogs are required to be kept in peak physical condition. This includes daily exercise, grooming, flea control and formal obedience training. The dogs must sleep indoors and be treated as beloved members of the family. To ensure their safety, there is a requirement that breeder dogs are always kept on leash when out-of-doors and only allowed to run freely in a securely fenced area.

#### **Phase T: Waiting for Training**

A decision to alter a dog can occur at any time during the breeder evaluation process. Once that decision is made the CFR, Training and Veterinary Departments are notified. The Veterinary staff schedule the alter surgery as soon as time is available. Once the dog has been altered and has recovered for surgery the Training Department will schedule the dog for the next available training string and the dog will begin receiving training phase numbers.

#### **K9 BUDDY PROGRAM**

The K9 Buddy Program matches specially selected dogs to become wonderful companions to children and young adults with visual impairment. A K9 Buddy can make a remarkable difference in any child's life by fostering a sense of caring, companionship and a sense of responsibility through the human/animal bond. A dog can contribute to sensory development, motivating a child to learn and enhancing self-esteem. K9 Buddy dogs come from Guide Dogs for the Blind's own colony, but are not qualified to work as mobility assistance dogs; K9 Buddies are not trained to perform a service and are not considered service dogs as defined by the ADA (January 2010). K9 Buddies are offered free-of-charge.

Dogs identified as candidates for the K9 Buddy program are evaluated for the program prior to being offered to the puppy raiser for adoption. When there is a suitable application and the dog is a good match for the child, a new K9 Buddy team is formed. As with other placements, contact information for the puppy raisers is shared with the K9 Buddy family and communication is encouraged.

The K9 Buddy program may also connect the child/family with GDB's community of puppy raisers and other supporters. This connection is as beneficial for raisers and other constituents as it is for the child and their family.

All dogs placed as K9 Buddies are recognized at a subsequent campus graduation and the puppy raiser is invited to attend and participate in that event. The DVD and photos of the ceremony are available to the new K9 Buddy's puppy raisers. The K9 Buddy youth and family may or may not attend the graduation, often based on their place of residence.

K9 Buddies are generally placed in the ten states in which there are puppies being raised and the staff to support these programs.