



STAGES OF
The Seeing Eye
JOURNEY



STAGE 1:

The First Weeks



Where we are in the life stages (1 of 5)



Age range of a dog in this stage
(birth through 7 weeks)

Introduction

The Seeing Eye journey involves more than a wonderful dog. It takes an entire village of caring, dedicated professionals, volunteers and donors, as well as a tremendous amount of resources, time, energy and patience to raise and train a puppy who will become a dog that transforms the life of someone who is blind or visually impaired.

Come along with us as we explore each stage of The Seeing Eye journey and the many contributing factors to a working guide dog team's ultimate success.

Their First Home



All Seeing Eye[®] puppies get their start in Chester, New Jersey. This is where The Seeing Eye's state-of-the-art whelping facility is located.

The Seeing Eye usually has between 50 and 100 puppies here at any given time. When you see **that many puppies?** The cuteness effect is overpowering.

Unique in the World



Our state-of-the-art breeding facility in Chester, New Jersey.

Opened in 2002, our breeding station is designed to provide the very best, healthy, positive atmosphere for growing puppies and a safe environment for expectant moms.

The Seeing Eye is the only guide dog school to maintain such a facility.

Vocabulary

WHELP:

(noun)

a young animal, especially a young dog or wolf. Used interchangeably with the word pup or puppy.

WHELPING OR WHELP:

(verb)

to give birth to—used of various carnivores and especially dogs. “Zoey whelped seven puppies.”






Our dogs are in labor around 4.5 hours. It varies quite a bit depending on the number of puppies in the litter.

Nearly Go Time

During the final week of the pregnancy, we place a baby monitor beside the whelping box at night so that we can hear any activity. We use a service called Whelp-Wise to monitor the strength, duration and frequency of contractions.




Did You Know?

-  Dogs are pregnant for approximately 63 days.
-  Like humans, dogs are pregnant for three trimesters.
-  Our Veterinary Technicians are always present for a delivery and ready to help if mama needs it.

One Box to Birth Them All

A whelping box, or a nesting box as it is sometimes called, is where our dogs deliver their puppies and raise them for approximately the first three weeks of their lives. We have found that kiddie pools with lots of soft, cozy blankets are the perfect size and shape for a whelping box and are easy to keep clean and disinfect.

Did You Know?

-  Seeing Eye moms typically have 3 or 4 litters in their lifetime.
-  The average litter is about 7 puppies.
-  We retire the moms from breeding at age 4.

The Importance of Human Contact

The first human beings Seeing Eye-puppies interact with are crucial to their development. From a very young age, we get the dogs used to being handled, picked up, petted and stroked.



Dog Caretakers:

- Veterinarians
- Veterinary Technicians
- Veterinary Assistants
- Volunteers

Even their little feet will be handled to get them used to human beings.

“ We weigh them every day and talk to them. We’re making sure they’re healthy and growing well.”

MARIA HEVNER

Senior Manager, Canine Clinic and Breeding Station

Keeping A Close Eye



Seeing Eye staff monitor the dogs and puppies 24/7, and along with



volunteers, ensure that the dogs and puppies are exposed to all the care, love and affection they can handle.

Even at this young age, volunteers are assessing the puppies with a checklist.

What is the Seeing Eye looking for at this stage?

-  Are they gaining weight?
-  Is mom cleaning and feeding them enough?

The Name Game



At two weeks of age, the puppies are named! Our Manager of Puppy Development has the honor of generating and bestowing the names.

All the puppies in a litter are given a name that starts with the same letter. The litters are named alphabetically. We begin with A on October 1st, the beginning of our fiscal year. Then each puppy in the next litter gets a name that begins with B, and all the way through to the “Z” litter, when we start over again.

“ Since between 65 and 70 litters are born each year, we go through the entire alphabet a couple of times a year. Sometimes with the tough letters like X or Z, we really have to get creative.”

JILL JAYCOX

The Linda Feinne-Roth Manager of
Puppy Development at The Seeing Eye

Naming Rules

For puppy names, we aim for no more than two syllables. The name must be easy to say, not have a negative connotation and sound distinctive from the commands that we give.

Donors who give \$5,000 or more to The Seeing Eye are entitled to name a puppy and get updates about its progress throughout the program. These supporters often give names in honor of loved ones, both human and canine.

For more information on how to choose a name that will change a life, visit: www.SeeingEye.org/name

A Puppy's Progress



When the pups are three weeks old, the pools are removed and replaced with crates. Once they reach four weeks, puppies can venture outside on their own through a doggie door easy enough for a puppy to push. Usually they watch mom do it a few times, then try it on their own.

Gruel Glorious Gruel!

While pups are still nursing with their mom, we begin to introduce what we call “gruel.”

This is kibble we grind up and mix with water, so it’s soft and easy for them to eat.



Gradually, we grind it less and less. At five weeks old, the puppies get their first complete physical and eye exam. At six and a half weeks, they are given their first vaccines and microchips.

Can you believe it?

In a year, The Seeing Eye goes through more than 90,000 pounds of kibble.

Personality Plus

We get asked
sometimes...
are Seeing Eye pup-
pies mischievous?



Well, of course they
are! We've noticed that German shepherd
puppies tend to be the more vocal ones.
While Labradors are bold and always in the
middle of everything.

Once their little teeth start coming in, we
give the puppies a pen full of toys to chew.
But you know what? Sometimes it's **way**
more fun to chew on your brother's collar
than a toy. The puppies love to roughhouse
and tease each other and play keep-away.

Dear Old Mom



moms are the primary caretakers for the puppies at this point in their lives, and each mom has her own style of mothering. Some are hyper-vigilant, and some are more relaxed.

Did you know that there are even foster dog moms? If a mom has a very large litter of puppies, say eleven, that's sometimes more than a mom can handle or nurse properly. We'll give some of her puppies to another mom who has also recently given birth but to a smaller litter. That mom takes care of the new puppies as if they were her own.



Time to Explore!

Starting at four weeks old, puppies begin daily visits to the puppy play room while mom stays behind and enjoys some time to herself. In the play rooms, the pups will be exposed to lots of things they may encounter in their adult life—stairs, Astroturf, replicas of curbs and train stations. And of course, lots of exercise, obstacles and games.



Keeping Things Mellow

To keep the environment peaceful for the puppies, we pipe in calming music and use neutral colors for wall paint, blankets and fleeces. When the puppies are really little, we have a heat lamp over the pool to keep them warm, in addition to the facility's heated floors.



Ready, Set, Grow!

Once the puppies reach 7-8 weeks, they leave our facility to live with their puppy raiser and a **whole new adventure begins.**

That's Stage 2: Puppy Raising!

