



# RUFFWEAR<sup>®</sup> working dogs

At Ruffwear, we believe in and support the critical role of working dogs in our society. Highly trained service dogs offer access and often freedom for humans with disabilities. These dogs who perform these critical tasks are partners, in every way, to the humans who rely on them to survive and live life to the fullest. At Ruffwear, we could not be more grateful for and impressed by these working dogs and teams.

As a manufacturer and seller of dog gear, Ruffwear has always done its best to support the dog community by equipping it with the best and highest quality gear we can design and manufacture. We have proudly supported working dogs and their handlers since 1994. In turn, working dogs have influenced many of Ruffwear's products over the years through testing and product ideas born out of necessity. Gear designed specifically for the service dog community includes the Access™ ID Vest, Access™ ID Lite Vest and the Treat Trader™ Bag. Ruffwear is proud to support and collaborate with these teams of specially trained service dogs and handlers.

Previously, Ruffwear's line of service dog products was only available to purchase through select service dog organizations and schools. This decision was originally made in conjunction with those organizations. However, the lack of access to our products to the remainder of the service dog community – those who owner-train their dogs or hire trainers from different programs to train their service dog – does not align with our core mission to support all dogs and especially working dogs in our society. This led our internal team to re-think our program and redesign it by partnering with members of this portion of the service dog community and learning from them.

Through thoughtful conversations and honest discourse, we learned a lot and we are so grateful to have these community members helping us grow and learn throughout the process. One thing became abundantly clear in our work with these teams – this portion of the service dog community is more often than not underserved and undersupported. With this newfound understanding and a goal to remove any barriers for service dog owners that we might contribute to, we have amended our service dog offerings.

Going forward Ruffwear will now offer access to our service dog products on Ruffwear.com as a means to reach those who truly depend on it. We will also continue to support working dogs through our discounted gear program or Pro Purchase Program. Currently, all working dogs including owner-trained and school-trained service dogs will continue to be accepted to this program and receive this discount.

We acknowledge that some dog owners may try to exploit and misrepresent untrained dogs as service animals by buying a vest. We want to be very clear that not only is this illegal but it risks the reputation, safety and access of all working and service dogs. So please, in no uncertain terms, do not mistake this positive step towards increased access for disabled individuals as an invitation to violate the law or perpetuate these dangerous acts of misrepresentation. We know this has been an ongoing challenge in this space and as we move to be more inclusive, we also look forward to continuing to learn more directly from the community and advocate for policy changes that will protect all working dogs from this issue and others. Because these issues of misrepresentation are widespread and dangerous, we want to be very clear here:

Just as our normal gear lines are meant to support all dogs no matter the adventure, our working dog gear is designed exclusively for dogs who are specifically trained to help humans, whether that be tasked trained to assist a person with a disability, or helping with emergency response efforts. With hopes that we can positively influence and support the working dog community, Ruffwear wants to continue its dedication to working dogs. So please, respect these k9 heroes and support them and our mission to do so by purchasing the Ruffwear gear that is built to serve all dogs and help them live their best adventurous life.

*If you do not have a working dog,* please feel free to look at our other product lines, and know that by purchasing gear from Ruffwear, you are supporting us in our mission of championing the efforts and safety of working dogs in our communities.

We recognize the validity of both owner-trained and school-trained service dogs that perform specific tasks to improve quality of life and by opening up the distribution of our working and service dog products. Our goal is to remove barriers for service dog owners/handlers to get the very best gear on an individual level. We recognize that this community remains underserved and it is our goal to make our equipment as available as we can to the people who need it most while protecting the integrity of our mission.