

## **How To Fit & Use A Head Halter**

### **(We use the Black Dog Brand)**

If your dog finds it hard to walk calmly and confidently on a loose lead, they **may** benefit from wearing a head or training halter. Considered power steering for dogs the head halter is a humane training tool offering advantages such as teaching your dog to be calm, confident and to walk nicely on a lead when out in public. A head halter will reduce neck injury caused by pulling. This in turn makes walks very pleasant and increases the bond between you and your dog.

Wouldn't it be great that when you hold up the lead and halter to go for a walk, your dog sits calmly while you attach it? It's eventually easy, but it takes time, patience and you need to have fun!

For the head collar to be an effective and comfortable experience for your dog we need to form positive associations with their new collar giving them rewards (pats, praise, treats, play, walking) while we practice fitting and using the head halter. Just like when we wore braces or glasses for the first time, so to do our dogs need encouragement for accepting the feel and use of the collar. For some dogs, they will be learning to walk all over again. We fit the halter at our dog's pace so they will work with us and not fight against it.

### **How Does the Head Halter Work?**

We want to walk with a loose (not slack) lead that holds no tension. It is important never to harshly jerk or correct our dogs when they are wearing a halter or to pull them when they are behind us. (This will cause injury to your dog)

Fitted correctly when your dog pulls on the lead their head will be drawn sideways and downwards turning their head so they are looking backwards at you making it very difficult to continue walking.

### **How will my dog react to wearing a training collar?**

Initially pawing, rubbing and rolling to be free of the halter is to be expected. If this continues past the first few fitting sessions, slow down and go back a few steps. Remember your dogs are adjusting to the new feel and fit of this equipment. It is important that you supervise your dog at all times when wearing the halter and your dog does not expect to go for a walk when you fit the halter, rather your dog is accepting of the halter because of pats, treats and praise only. Don't let your dog paw off the collar as he will try again in the future. Rather ask for attention and reward with treat or pig's ear and the pawing behaviour will diminish with practice.

### **Does My Dog Have to Wear The Head Halter Always?**

Some dogs feel more confident when wearing a halter and will do so for the rest of their lives. Some dogs do not cope with the halter and will shut down. If this happens we find a harness may work better here. (Your Trainer will advise you)

Generally a head halter can be a training tool to loose lead walking on a flat collar or martingale if this is the aim of the owner but as each dog is different, as long as the collar is fitted correctly and the lead is used appropriately it is effective to use a halter for as long as your dog needs it.

### **How do I fit the collar?**

Initially your trainer will correctly fit the collar to suit the size and shape of your dogs head. You will need to check this fit with use as it will naturally loosen with the movements your dog makes. The strap collar fits snugly around your dog's neck directly behind the dog's ears with one or two fingers being able to slip underneath. The slide makes it easy to custom the nose piece so it does not slide past the skin of your dog's nose.

Follow the program below to comfortably condition your dog to wearing the training halter. Progress to each new step only as your dog is ready.

1. Let your dog sniff and touch the collar and reward any interest with treats.
2. Clasp the collar strap behind your dogs head so it fits snugly just behind your dogs ears. If the strap is too big or too small make the size adjustments away from your dogs head. You want to be able to fit one or two fingers underneath the collar.
3. With the nose piece loose, ask your dog to put their nose through so they wear the piece themselves. Use a lure here by holding the nose piece in front of your dogs face with a treat in your other hand. Show the treat to your dog and lure their nose through the loop. Repeat this move frequently so your dog automatically puts his nose through when he sees you holding out the nose piece.
4. With your dog wearing the nose piece, clasp the collar strap behind their head. Your head halter has been professionally fitted but you still need to check that the nose piece does not slide down past the skin of your dog's nose, when their mouth is closed. A second person to treat your dog may help here, or scatter the treats on the ground. Reward anytime you unclip the collar and repeat this step several times.
5. Now you should be able to put the collar on your dog and they do not scratch it off. If so we can begin to attach the lead and the connector. In a distraction free environment and with lots of treats ready begin to walk your dog so they can become accustomed to the weight and feel of the collar. Begin with short sessions by rewarding for every step they are walking next to you and build up to where you can walk in a straight line and make left and right turns easily. If your dog struggles against or begins to paw off their collar during this stage, do not remove the collar. Ask for their attention, practice a sit and try again. By repeating this process several times a day you will find your dog begins to accept the collar easily and walks nicely next to you.

6. At this stage start to slowly increase the duration they are wearing the collar for and begin to add in distractions. Practice walking inside and outside progressing to walking out the front of your house and down your street for short distances.

7. be aware of your dogs body language so you will know how far to walk your dog and as your dog becomes more comfortable with walking out in public on a halter, you can begin to fade the treats so the walk becomes their reward.

**REMEMBER** buying a collar from a store and fitting it yourself without professional help can be asking for trouble. Not all dogs can handle this type of equipment. For those dogs that are phobic, your trainer may suggest a harmony harness. Check out our harmony harnesses on our website.