



## **Muzzle Training**

Dogs can't tell us if they are feeling scared or painful. As a result, even the most friendly and nicely natured dog can bite if in a highly distressed state. Some training can help to manage such a situation in a way that is most helpful for your dog. You can help your dog to enjoy wearing a muzzle. This piece of equipment can allow for better veterinary care and a less stressful visit for your dog.

### **What Type of Muzzle?**

A basket style muzzle (either plastic or leather) allows dogs to pant. For this reason it is the safest and most comfortable option for your dog. A more thorough and accurate examination is possible if a highly distressed dog is muzzled. Many dogs will also be calmer once a muzzle is fitted.

### **Won't My Dog Hate Being Muzzled?**

No. In fact you can train your dog to walk into his muzzle with his tail wagging. With some simple and straightforward training he can come to welcome the opportunity to put his muzzle on. Just as he looks forward to the jingle of his lead or rattle of his food bowl.

If your dog is introduced to the muzzle gradually, then he will accept it very readily. Choose a time to train when you know your dog is hungry. Encourage your dog to approach the muzzle and offer a treat. Place a piece of food at the strap end and allow him to eat it. Over a few repetitions you can place food treats further into the muzzle so he puts his nose right into the basket. Then do the strap up momentarily and progress to him wearing it for a few seconds and then a minute or two and so on.

Always associate the muzzle with good things. Progress at a speed your dog can enjoy. If you are having fun, chances are your dog is too. Keep the sessions short and set your dog up to succeed.

Some muzzles will need a little modification to allow food treats to be given – make sure you do this if needed. Treats such as peanut butter, pâté and cream cheese can all be applied to the end of the muzzle as an added incentive to want to keep it on too.

### **How Can I Help My Dog Enjoy Wearing the Muzzle?**

It is not surprising that some dogs resist having a muzzle put on at the vet clinic. If the muzzle always predicts something bad is about to happen, your dog will naturally begin to avoid the muzzle.

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The way to prevent this concern about the muzzle is to make sure your dog has LOTS of positive experiences wearing his muzzle. Treats, verbal praise, a walk, pats and cuddles on your lap can all happen with your dog wearing his muzzle. He might have some other favourite activities you can do wearing the muzzle too.

If your dog has many happy experiences wearing the muzzle then he will come to look forward to the opportunity to wear it. Once in a while he might need to have a veterinary procedure performed with his muzzle on. However, your care and training will mean that wearing that muzzle isn't going to be such a big deal after all.

Giving yourself and your dog time to get used to a muzzle and using it gently and wisely can make future veterinary visits a happier event for everyone.