

CLIENT INFORMATION

Canine Muzzles: Proper Use and Training

Using a muzzle neither increases a dog's aggression, nor does it cure a dog's problem. However, a well-chosen muzzle of the appropriate size can help you and your dog while you work under the supervision of a veterinary behaviorist.

When should a muzzle be used?

We commonly recommend the use of muzzles if:

- The dog's problem requires that we prevent bites in training sessions or certain situations in the dog's life (visitors, children, other pets in the household).
- We want to allow the owner to relax. Sometimes an owner's tension can increase the dog's anxiety.
- We must prevent licking wounds or destroying bandages.
- We must prevent pica (eating objects).

Note: Unless otherwise instructed by your veterinarian, only use a properly fitted basket muzzle in situations where your dog can be monitored.

Important

Do not use a muzzle to punish a dog. Do not use a muzzle exclusively in certain situations (such as children visiting your home) as it may create an undesired association.

Which type of muzzle should be used?

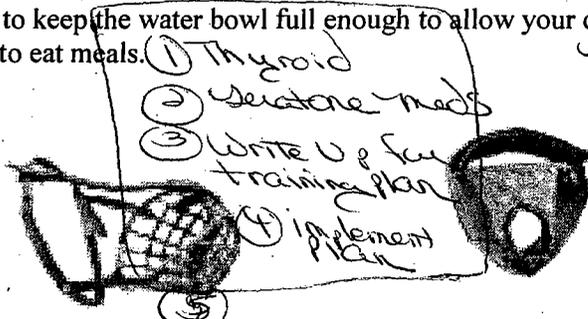
We prefer to use so-called cage muzzles or basket muzzles, which are made of metal or plastic mesh, and have an open end and a closed end. Cage or basket muzzles allow the dog to pant (regulate the body temperature), and accept food rewards without the ability to bite. Avoid fabric muzzles that hold the dog's mouth closed because they do not allow the dog to breathe freely or pant (see below). Closed-mouth muzzles also prevent the dog from taking food treats as rewards during training.

The fit of a basket muzzle is based on the length and width of your dog's nose. A basket muzzle is properly fitted if you can pull the whole muzzle forward and the top bar of the muzzle does not come farther than half-way down the bridge of your dog's nose. This keeps the muzzle far back enough so that a dog cannot squish his nose around the end of it and get it off. For best results, have your dog's basket muzzle fitted by a veterinary behaviorist or veterinarian.

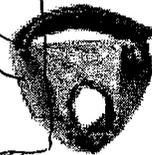
While your dog is wearing a muzzle, make sure to keep the water bowl full enough to allow your dog to drink. Remove the muzzle on a regular basis to allow your dog to eat meals.



Wire Basket-type



Plastic Basket-type



Fabric Closed-mouth muzzle

Triggers
- Handling
Issues

Unpredictable
Catch body
language

- ① Keep people seen
- ② Opportunities

pos

Victoria
Stillwell

Jane
Folander

Trainer
Yvonne
Schindler
Pet
Suzanne
LST - Bice

Association
Pet
Trainers

DVD - Video

The...
Sara... Rain...

"Target Hand"
on lead

Can
Anticipate

head
the
lean over

Yoga
Mat
Treat only
sore

positive tone

leash
& supervised

call her
clear

night
Behind gate, no bones, watch body
language,

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Where can you purchase a basket muzzle for your dog?

- U of M Veterinary Medical Center:
Call (612) 624-0797 to set up an appointment for a muzzle fitting.
You can also arrange to bring your dog to a demonstration on how to train him to wear the muzzle comfortably. (a small fee may apply)
- Internet resources to order muzzles: www.morrco.com www.jbpet.com

Training your dog to wear a basket muzzle

Before you begin training:

- Read through all five steps of the instructions to ensure you understand what you will be doing. If you have any questions, please contact the U of MN Veterinary Medical Center Behavior Service at 612-624-0797.
- Pick a place and time that are free of distractions.
- Keep training sessions brief – 5 to 10 minutes at the most, and end training on a good note.
- Have plenty of food treats available in kibble-size portions.
- If your dog will not work for food, please contact the Behavior Service before starting your training.

1. In this first step, you will hold the muzzle, open end pointed toward your dog, and offer a food treat (FT) to your dog outside the muzzle. You will gradually move the FT inside the muzzle, going from the open end of the muzzle to the closed end of the muzzle, so that your dog follows the FT into the muzzle.

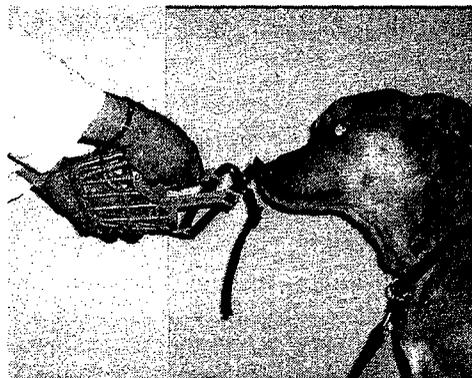
Begin by offering your dog a food treat (FT) from just inside the open end of the muzzle. Your dog may approach the muzzle from any direction but the objective is to have the dog place his/her nose into the muzzle. Initially allow your dog to take the FT from your hand. As you slowly progress, move the FT farther into the muzzle, allowing it to rest on the floor of the muzzle, so that your dog willingly puts his nose into the muzzle to get to the FT.

If at any point your dog hesitates to take the FT, you have moved the FT too far into the muzzle. Move the FT closer to the opening until the dog willingly takes the treat, and work your way back into the muzzle.

Don't worry if your dog sniffs around the muzzle before putting his/her nose into the muzzle. This is normal behavior and is just his/her way of learning that the only way to obtain the FT is to enter from one direction. Once your dog is very interested in the muzzle, readily takes the FT from deep inside the muzzle, and comes to you when you have the muzzle in your hand, you can move to step 2.



Step 1: The food treat is offered outside the muzzle.



Step 1: The food treat is offered near the opening of the muzzle.



Step 1: The food treat is offered inside the muzzle.

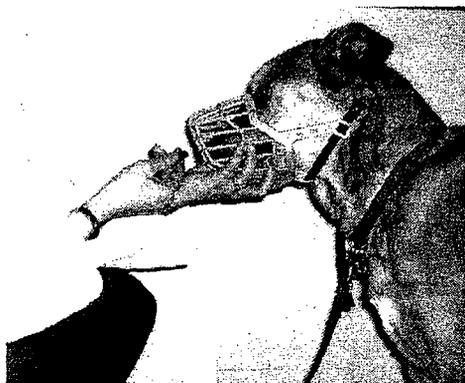
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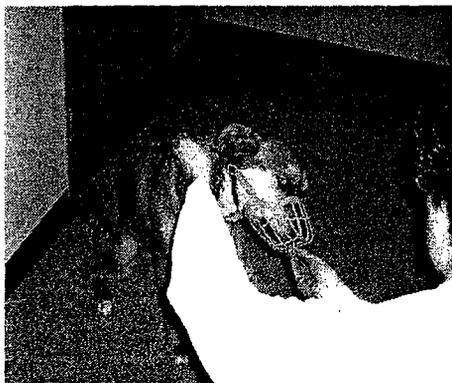
- It is now time to start increasing the time your dog will keep his/her nose in the muzzle before getting a FT. Your dog should keep his/her nose in the muzzle while trying to get the FT from your hand rather than removing his/her nose from the muzzle to take the FT from you. Once your dog's nose enters the muzzle, present the FT to the closed end of the muzzle. Allow your dog a chance to take some of it from your hand while his nose remains in the muzzle.

Note: If your dog quickly removes his nose from the muzzle, you have either waited too long to present the FT to him or you are holding it too far away from the end of the muzzle. Do not reprimand your dog for this behavior, just remove the muzzle from the sight of your dog and then re-present it to him.

Increase the time delay for introducing FTs in small amounts – fractions of seconds. Once your dog is willing to keep his nose in the muzzle with a momentary delay in presenting the FTs, move to the next step, where you will buckle the muzzle strap around your dog's head.



Step 2: The food treat is offered outside the muzzle.



Step 3: While offering a food treat, the hand begins to move the strap over the back of the dog's neck.



Step 3: The hand applies pressure to the strap placed over the back of the dog's neck.

- In this step you will present the muzzle, treat your dog for putting and keeping his nose inside, and move the muzzle strap over the neck of your dog and apply pressure.

With your dog's nose in the muzzle, present the Food Treat (FT) and while your dog is eating the FT, slowly reach your left hand towards the neck strap. If your dog does not show concern about your hand moving towards the neck strap, use your left hand to gently move the strap over the back of your dog's neck and apply a mild to moderate amount of pressure to the strap in a downward direction. Do this several different times to make sure that your dog is comfortable with the pressure being applied. The maximum amount of pressure necessary is similar to what it takes to hold the muzzle in place while fastening the strap and may be slightly different for each dog.

If your dog has shown any concerns such as watching your hand move towards the strap, withdrawing his nose from the muzzle as your hand is moving or pulling back out of the muzzle as soon as pressure is applied to the strap you will need to slow down your training. Start again by presenting the muzzle, allow your dog to place his nose into the muzzle, give him the FT, and with a very slow and steady movement, reach towards the strap and remove your hand. Move your hand towards the strap only a few centimeters at a time. Have several treats ready so that you can keep your dog's nose in the muzzle during this time and repeat reaching towards the strap, closer and closer, until you are able to touch the strap. Once you can touch the strap, remove the basket muzzle from your dog and start the process over again. When your dog is comfortable with the strap going over the back of his neck, you can start applying slight to moderate pressure to the strap as described in the second paragraph of this step.

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4. In this step you will lock the strap of the muzzle around your dog's head. Have plenty of Food Treats (FT) available. Present the muzzle to your dog, allow him to place his nose into the muzzle, give him a FT, move the strap over the back of his neck, apply pressure, and snap the clip. Immediately start putting treats into the closed end of the muzzle, one after another, to reward and associate the basket muzzle being strapped on. After giving your dog the FTs, remove the muzzle. Repeat this process until your dog is anticipates the FT and is not concerned with the locking of the strap.



Step 4: The strap has been fastened while the dog is offered a food treat.

5. You can start increasing the amount of time the muzzle is on before the FT appears and you can start introducing different distractions while the muzzle is in place. You can go for walks, ask the dog to perform tricks he already knows, or go through some basic obedience commands. Make sure you continue to give food treats to your dog during these activities.