

This guide has been written as an introduction to the use of muzzles. Many owners may feel concerned regarding negative public perceptions linked to dogs wearing muzzles, ie: that a dog wearing a muzzle is likely to be dangerous, and the associated stigma attached may prevent muzzling being considered. This misconception must be dispelled because muzzles may be a useful aid to **ALL** dog owners. Even the most well tempered dog can bite when in pain. Even something minor, like a torn claw, can cause a dog to snap when you try to examine the foot. Imagine the worst was to happen - a road accident, or similar. We could not be sure that even the most well tempered dog would not react.

Similarly another use for a muzzle is for those dogs that are renowned scavengers and repeatedly eat foreign material on walks (carcasses, faeces, litter etc), as this may be the best way to prevent recurring gastro-intestinal upsets.

For these situations to not cause any undue stress to your dog, it is best to train your dog to accept its use so that it does not regard the muzzle as a threat or punishment.

Muzzle training should be based on a reward-based training system so that positive associations are made in the dog's mind when fitting and wearing a muzzle.

As a practice we recommend that a 'Baskerville™' muzzle should be used as these muzzles allow your dog to breathe freely and pant freely. The other advantages of these muzzles are that dogs are able to drink water when wearing them and food treats can be posted through the holes in the end of the muzzle to aid with reward-based training.

We stock a variety of sizes of the 'Baskerville™' muzzles and our nurses can help you to choose and fit the appropriate size for your dog.

Muzzle training can take days to weeks and patience will be needed as well as a 'novel' desired treat or favourite food. If muzzle training is rushed, your dog may interpret fitting/wearing the muzzle as a negative experience or worse still a punishment which will hinder training progress.

The following approach is recommended.

1. Hold the muzzle very still and in an open position with the neck strap out of the way.
2. Place a treat in the nose section of the muzzle and holding the muzzle in your hand, bring it up to the dog's nose. Your dog should sniff the treat and respond by putting his nose into the muzzle in order to remove the food. This step should be repeated as many times as needed until your dog is happy to retrieve the reward.
3. The next step involves sliding the muzzle over the dog's nose as he or she eats the treat and removing it as soon as the treat has been consumed. Each time you try this, leave the muzzle in position for a little longer until eventually you can also fasten the buckle around the back of your dog's head.
4. Each time you fit the muzzle you can use a simple command such as 'muzzle' so that the dog learns to associate the command and action. The dog will then use the command to predict the situation and this avoids startling the dog.
5. As with any training, it is best to ensure you repeat the above steps in a variety of locations and at a variety of times. This is to avoid your dog learning to anticipate the use of the muzzle in certain situations, eg: here in the consulting room!

Remember you should only expect your dog to wear a muzzle once it has been trained to accept it use!



Quick Reference Guide

Muzzle Training



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