



A head collar is recommended as a humane training device by the American Humane Association and Delta Society. Head collars are similar to a halter on a horse, a leash attaches close to the head rather than the neck. It offers the benefit of gaining a strong dog's attention and allows handlers of all sizes, particularly those with less strength, to handle dogs from puppies to large breeds. However, it does require a greater understanding than other collars to use it effectively and safely.

There are several brands of head collars, some brand names are: Halti, Gentle Leader, Snoot Loop, and New Trix. Some breeds with flat noses or breathing difficulties are not suited to a head halter. Ensure the design of the halter is suited for your dog and does not irritate the skin or ride up into the eyes. It is important to fit the head halter properly to make the dog comfortable and accepting. Some dogs will never become acclimated to the halter and are better off wearing some other collar or harness. This collar requires careful fitting for proper use, and some owners need experienced assistance. It is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** that whenever you are using a head halter you use a double ended leash. This allows for one point of contact of the leash to be attached to the halter, and the second point of contact to be attached to a harness or collar. The advantages of two points of contact is to reduce the risk of injury when using just one single point of contact on the head halter and acts as a safeguard to prevent the dog from escaping if the halter happens to slip off.

Once you have the head collar fit properly, spend at least a week having your dog wear the new head collar two to three times per day for five to ten minutes around the house. At this point the collar should be loose and **NOT** attached to a leash. Put your dog's head collar on by putting a cookie in the middle of the nose loop while slipping it over your dog's nose and fastening the back strap around your dog's neck. By pairing a cookie with the head collar your dog will think this new collar is a good thing. Randomly reward your dog for not bothering with the head collar. If your dog tries to rub and/or paw at the head collar try to distract them with a noise (e.g. whistle or squeak) or a toy (e.g. tennis ball). When your dog stops bothering the head collar reward your dog with a treat or toy. Your dog should become accustomed to wearing the halter without undue stress, through habituation and rewards, prior to using it on walks.

When walking your dog with a head collar it is important to give your dog enough leash so that when your dog is walking beside you there is a relaxed u-shape to the leash. Make sure the 'u' in your leash is between you and your dog, not coming up and over the top of your dog's neck. If your dog was to put tension on the leash when the u-shape is over your dog's neck this could hurt your dog by turning their head and neck upwards. Never jerk the leash when your dog is on a head collar.

Never use a head collar with a leash over 6 feet in length. Retractable leashes and long lines can severely hurt your dog when they are wearing their head collars because they crank their heads backward very quickly when your dog is running and hits the end of the line.

Head collars are useful training devices; they must be used safely and with the intent to wean the dog off of it within a limited amount of time. It is important to teach the dog what we want and not make the collar a condition for the behaviour. Head collars were designed to be a training aid not to do all the training. The best equipment accomplishes the training goal, in a timely manner, with the least possible physical intrusion on the dog. Training equipment should never cause physical harm, undue physical or emotional distress, or prolonged discomfort to the dog. Any type of equipment can cause injury if misused or improperly fit.