



HEAD COLLAR / “HALTI” / GENTLE LEADER

Haltis are a helpful and humane management tool for strong or large dogs. These collars fit loosely around the dog’s muzzle and attach to the leash under the chin. When the leash is taut, the dog’s head is gently turned to the side so that the dog is facing opposite to the direction they are trying to go. This teaches a dog that pulling forward will impede their progress and maintaining a loose leash will allow them to continue moving forward. Head collars are a valuable tool if used correctly as they do not inflict pain on the dog. Dogs should be slowly desensitized and introduced to a head collar with positive reinforcement before using it on walks.

1. Have your dog willingly place their face through head collar and reward them with high value treat without having it fully fastened yet. Repeat this step 4 - 5 times daily for 3 - 4 days.
2. Proceed to this step when your dog is excited to put their face through, if they are still hesitant stay at step 1. Have your dog willingly place their face through the head collar, fasten it, reward with high value treats and undo it within 5 seconds. Repeat this step 4 - 5 times daily for 3 days.
3. Proceed to this step when your dog is excited in step 2. Have your dog willingly place their face through the head collar, fasten it, have your dog wear it for 2 - 4 minutes while rewarding with treats. Take it off and stop the rewards. Repeat this step 4 - 5 times daily for 3 days.
4. Repeat step 3 and increase time your dog wears it while still rewarding when head collar is on.
5. Attach leash and start walking dog in your home while still rewarding the time head collar is on.
6. Start with short walks outside while rewarding with head collar on. Increase length of walks.

There are several brands of head collars, some brand names are: Halti, Gentle Leader, and Snoot Loop. 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. 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. 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 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.

If you find you are struggling to help your dog become used to its head collar, you can always call our behaviour outreach line at 403-723-6019 or book a consultation via our website <https://www.calgaryhumane.ca/what-we-do/animal-training/private-consultations/>