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MANAGING LEASH WALKING BEHAVIOR USING SPECIFIC PRODUCTS ON THE CURRENT MARKET

From the expert- Dr. Nicholas Dodman, author of “The Dog Who Loved Too Much,” and professor and director at Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine.

Dr. Dodman was part of a university-level research project that showed misuse of choke collars can lead to thyroid damage. More research has shown thyroid damage can contribute to aggressive behaviors. A German study found 48 out of 50 dogs had neck and spinal damage after normal use of choke collars. (Note: Even an improperly fitted martingale or flat-buckle collar can act as a choke.)

Dr. Dodman also is quoted as saying “At Tufts University, we have found the Gentle Leader system for dogs to be the best control system that we have encountered. Our clients love it and frequently report immediate and drastic changes in the way they are able to manage their dogs.”

From the trainers at the [A Sound Beginning Program](#), here are some easy-to-follow tips on how to use the head collar and other options available to you.

Head collar aka Gentle Leader This is the product Dr. Dodman recommends. It’s a head halter that stops pulling because the leash attaches in the front, and you can easily redirect your dog when you need to remove him from the problem area and increase distance. The drawback with a head collar is you will need to take some time to get your dog to be used to it — it’s not designed to be placed on the dog and begin walking right away. There is an adjustment and training period that is required. If you choose this management tool, here are the steps to do this safely and easily.

How to help your dog learn to wear a head collar

Should you want to use a head collar for walking or managing your dog on leash OR if you need to use a basket muzzle for safety at the vet’s office, you don’t want to begin by forcing it on the dog. You first must teach your dog to accept wearing the unit without the stress or fear that could be involved if you just put it directly on.

By following this step-by-step process, you will teach your dog through positive associations that wearing the head halter or muzzle is a good thing.

TO BEGIN: Set the unit on the counter with a bowl of treats near it.

Keep treats on top of fridge if you have a counter-surfing pooch!

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1. Every time you walk by the counter, pick up the unit, call the dog to you, praise and reward with a treat.

NOTE: After each of the following steps –

- *Set the unit back on the counter and go about your business.*
- *Repeat several times until your dog is completely comfortable before going to the next step.*

2. Perform step 1 and then lure with a treat through the nose-piece. Let go of the unit but keep your treat held high so the unit remains on the dog's nose (not hooked up). When the dog finishes the treat he will lower his head and the unit will fall to the ground.
3. Perform step 1 and step 2 and then clip the collar piece behind his ears, give a treat, remove the unit totally, then give another treat.
4. Repeat all of the above a few more times.
5. NEXT time call the dog to you and give a treat. Lure with another treat through the nose-piece, then hook up the unit and give another treat. Walk with dog about 5 steps, give a treat, then take the unit off. Reward with another treat.
6. Now you will just call the dog to you, give a treat, put the unit on, walk with the dog while giving multiple treats for paying attention and staying with you, etc. When you are done, remove the unit, treat and praise.
7. Practice every so often until you're ready to use it in the real world.

OTHER EASY-TO-USE TOOLS THAT REQUIRE NO FAMILIARIZATION PERIOD

No-slip collar aka Martingale collar or limited-slip collar. These are made of cloth. Do not use any that are made with metal or are all consisting of metal. It is a collar that tightens if the dog backs up (but doesn't choke them if properly fitted) so dog can't slip out and escape.

Freedom Harness: This is the one we highly recommend and use in our classes at the A Sound Beginning Program.

There is **no adjustment period**, and it gives you extra control because the leash attaches in the front on the chest and on the back. The product is also guaranteed, and the company live up to what they promise. Wonderful product, easy to use and will make a huge difference in managing your dog while out on walks ... and there is **NO FORCE, NO PAIN and NO FEAR.**

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