

BASKET MUZZLES



Muzzles can be a useful management tool. They should not be used as a means of socialization. If you use a muzzle, we recommend a secure basket-style muzzle rather than the soft "sleeve" nylon types. A properly fitted basket muzzle permits the dog to pant and to receive food rewards while wearing it. A muzzle that interferes with your dog's ability to pant should never be used for more than a few minutes because of the risk of over-heating.

An excellent website is <https://muzzleupproject.com/>.

There are excellent videos on training a dog to wear a muzzle as well as toys and treats that can be used with a muzzle.

Please introduce your dog to a muzzle gradually. The first step is to encourage him to eat from the muzzle while it is lying on the floor. Depending on the style of muzzle, he may be able to eat his food from it, or he can take larger pieces of treats or lick things like peanut butter, cream cheese, or squeeze cheese from the straps of a basket muzzle.

The next step is to desensitize your dog to your hands moving around his head. Without the muzzle, move your hands from the corners of your dog's mouth, behind his ears, and touch them together at the back of his head.

If you are not able to do the entire movement without your dog moving away, then go back to the last level that your dog was comfortable and gradually increase the amount of movement over the course of several weeks. Watch his body language at all times for any signs of distress. If he seems uncomfortable, return to the previous level.

Once your dog is comfortable with both this movement and with putting his nose into the end of the muzzle, you can combine the two. Have your dog put his nose in the muzzle while you pull the straps together and hold them while he eats the food from the muzzle. Release the straps immediately when your dog finishes the food. At this stage you can fasten the buckle while he eats, but the muzzle should be fastened only long enough for your dog to finish the food.

The final step is to let him eat the food smeared in the front of the muzzle, then let him continue to wear it for a few moments while you feed more peanut butter, cream cheese, or squeeze cheese through the openings in the muzzle. Gradually over time, you can increase the time he spends wearing the muzzle. You should continue to offer him food through the holes in the muzzle as you increase the time.



Dogs can hurt people and animals even while wearing a muzzle, by jumping on them or by lunging at them and hitting them with the muzzle. Dogs can also remove muzzles if they are persistent enough. If a dog removes a muzzle with the straps still fastened around his neck, it can be dangerous to try to unfasten the straps. Always make sure the muzzle straps are snug and secure around his neck just below his ears.

It is safest to remove a muzzle when your dog is distracted. For example, as you leave the vet hospital, you can remove the muzzle as the dog steps outside, since he will probably be interested in sights and smells, or just eager to get back into the car. Be sure there are no other dogs or people nearby before you remove the muzzle.

Your dog should always be actively supervised while wearing a muzzle. Dogs cannot be left muzzled while you are away or while they are unsupervised in the yard.