

## Why and how the Gentle Leader® Headcollar works

The Gentle Leader Headcollar allows you to communicate with your dog clearly and effectively. This humane headcollar is a training tool to help eliminate unwanted behaviors and to produce the desired behavior. Once the behavior is achieved, you can reward. This combination sets you and your dog up for success.

Dogs have an opposition reflex which encourages them to pull, even if they are choking. Unlike traditional collars, the headcollar places the pressure on the back of the neck instead of the front of the throat. This shift in pressure location allows the headcollar to take advantage of the opposition reflex. Your dog will instinctively lean back into the pressure when the leash becomes tight from pulling. This will decrease pulling and remove unsafe pressure from your dog's trachea.

Where the nose goes, the body follows! That's why head halters are used on horses — it takes very little strength to control a large animal with a head halter vs. collar. The headcollar works in the same way, allowing you to gently direct the head in the direction you want it to go. You can also redirect the dog away from situations and distractions when needed.

### Positive motivation and rewards

Help your dog learn quickly and have fun!

#### Timing:

Your reward MUST be given directly following the desired behavior so your communication is clear and precise. Keep treats in a pouch or your pocket for quick access. Having good timing may take practice at first, but no matter what, always remember to reward!

Rewards: Below are examples of rewards for most dogs. They can be paired or used separately.

- Treats! Use small pieces of a very tasty treat — it helps if your dog is somewhat hungry.
- Praise your dog in a calm and pleasant voice — never yell or harshly scold as this may frighten your dog, hindering the learning process.
- Release ALL tension on the leash the instant your dog does what you want (walks calmly, sits quietly, etc.) — this is very important because the lack of tension is part of the reward.

#### Proper use of your leash:

- Never keep constant tension on the leash.
- Never jerk or yank the leash. A smooth, gentle pull followed by a release of tension is all that is needed.

Encourage your dog to follow you by using positive verbal cues, body language, treats or a toy. As he walks, praise in a friendly, cheerful voice and offer a treat. If your dog tends to hang back and not want to walk with you, don't pull on the leash. The pressure at the back of the neck will make your dog want to slow down. If he doesn't seem to want to move even with the treat, you may want to try walking in a different direction or using a tastier treat.

When should your dog wear the Gentle Leader Headcollar? Beginning as early as 8-10 weeks of age, the headcollar can be worn by your puppy or dog whenever you want to prevent leash pulling, lunging, jumping, barking, etc. If you are dealing with behavior problems, such as aggression, that necessitate the use of the headcollar, consult with your veterinarian or animal behavior professional.

### Introducing your dog to the Gentle Leader Headcollar

For most dogs, the headcollar will produce positive results within the first few minutes. The fit and feel are a new experience for your dog, and we recommend that you take your time introducing the headcollar slowly. Taking small steps and getting your dog used to the headcollar is an excellent way to maximize the effectiveness and success of the halter. We want your dog to love putting on his Gentle Leader Headcollar!

Try these helpful hints during the first week before actual use:

- Have your dog wear the headcollar during meal time. Put it on immediately before they eat and take it off immediately after they are finished.
- Hold the nose loop open and invite your dog to place his snout through the loop. When your dog puts his nose even partially in the loop say "yes" and give him a treat. Don't move toward the dog during this process, just let him choose. If he doesn't move to place his nose in the loop, just remove the headcollar for a few seconds, then try again. If your dog is still hesitant, you might want to try having your dog simply touch the headcollar and then receive a reward. Remember, you are not in a hurry.
- Put the headcollar on your dog twice a day for three minutes or less. During those three minutes, do not go for a walk, but give your dog treats and praise or playtime. When you take the headcollar off, the treats and praise should stop.
- After about a week, or after the dog is eager to wear the headcollar, put the head collar on, include treats and praise, then go for a short 5-10 minute walk — consistently giving praise and rewards. Consider doing this at home or in the yard for the first couple of times. Do this for the following two days. Refer to the section "Taking your dog for a walk with the headcollar" for the 5-10 minute walks.



The following may prohibit the headcollar from working effectively:

- Improper fit (neck strap too loose, nose loop too tight. Refer back to fitting instructions)
- Lack of a strongly motivating reward (food and praise)
- Failure to release ALL tension on the leash immediately following a desired behavior.

**CAUTION** A dog needs to open his mouth to pant/breathe during physical activity or stress. Do not keep a constant pull on the leash for more than about 20-30 seconds. Your dog will be able to open his mouth as needed when there is no tension on the leash.

### Taking your dog for a walk with the Gentle Leader Headcollar

Be sure to read ALL fitting instructions before you begin to walk with your dog. Stand to one side of your dog, and grasp the leash. Allow enough slack in the leash for the dog to be able to move his head freely but not so much that he can move several feet away from you. Begin by walking forward and encouraging your dog to come alongside you, saying, "Let's Go," "Walk" or another cue you may use. When your dog is walking calmly next to your side, there should be ABSOLUTELY NO tension on the leash! As he walks at your side, give a treat and encouraging praise.

### Stop pulling and lunging easily with the Gentle Leader Headcollar

To prevent pulling in front or lunging, keep a short leash when you begin your walks. When your dog attempts to lunge or pull, simply hold the leash firmly (don't jerk) and his nose and head will be turned back to look at you. Immediately release ALL the tension (the most important part of the training process!) as he stops pulling and slows his pace. Reward with a treat and praise.

If your dog succeeds in pulling out ahead of you, this means you've allowed too much slack in the leash. Quickly take up all the slack (don't jerk!), and very gently redirect his head towards you. Release when your dog turns to you. This will prevent him from pulling farther ahead. Keep walking at your normal pace, and as you walk alongside him, immediately reward by releasing the tension on the leash, along with a treat and praise.

### Converting the Gentle Leader Headcollar to a traditional style collar

Many families enjoy such ease when using the headcollar that they won't use anything else! Others prefer to use a headcollar for only a short period of time, and then transition back to a traditional style collar.

The headcollar offers the unique ability to convert from a head collar to a regular collar. When you are happy with your dog's behavior on walks, simply use the neck strap of the headcollar as you would a regular collar, without placing the nose loop around your dog's nose. Attach the leash to the "O" ring, and the nose loop becomes an extension of the leash. Whenever you need more control, just slip the nose loop back over your dog's nose. Adjust the fit as needed. We recommend when using the nose loop as an extension of the leash to slide the snap clamp all the way up to the Center Bar to prevent the dog from chewing at the snap.

### Working with your local professional for more complicated behavior problems

If you are experiencing more complicated behavior problems, or simply would like additional hands-on assistance, we encourage you to consult with your veterinarian, local trainer or behavior specialist.

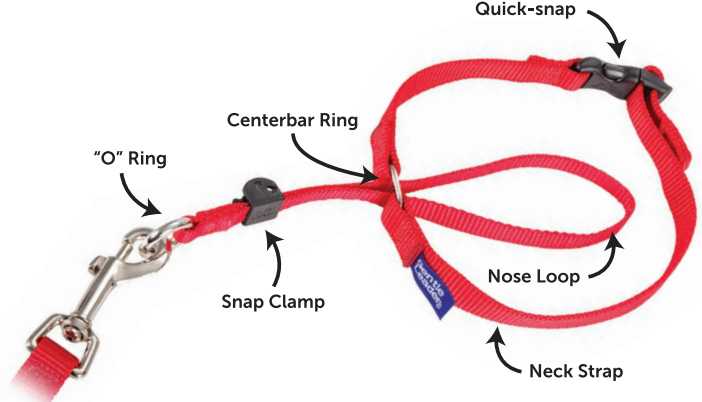
The headcollar can also be helpful with fearful or shy dogs — leading behaviorists and trainers report that the headcollar is particularly effective in helping fearful and shy dogs feel more secure and calm in situations that produce anxiety.

**NOTICE** There are many different reasons why a dog may exhibit signs of aggression — fear, pain, medical problems, territorial instinct, etc. While the headcollar can be an extremely effective and important tool in dealing with many aggression problems, it is not a "cure." In these instances, you must seek the services of a professional (behaviorist, veterinarian or trainer) with experience in diagnosing and prescribing treatment programs for aggression problems. Your regular veterinarian can provide you with a referral to such a specialist.

When dealing with more difficult problems such as anxiety or aggression, your pet professional may give instructions for using the headcollar that differ from those listed here. In these cases, you should still closely follow our fitting instructions to avoid unnecessary complications.

# Gentle Leader® Headcollar fitting step by step

**Important:** Throughout the fitting process and during initial use of the Gentle Leader Headcollar, motivate and encourage your dog with praise and special tasty treats. If your dog is especially active, have someone help you by feeding treats while you fit and adjust. Please fit your dog in a quiet indoor space to ensure a stress free and safe environment. Visit [www.PetSafe.net/Gentle-Leader-Headcollar](http://www.PetSafe.net/Gentle-Leader-Headcollar) for an instructional video.



**1** Open neck strap and hold one end in each hand. The nose loop should hang down, like the letter "T." (Fig. A)

**2** Position the neck strap as high up on the neck as possible, just behind the ears. (Fig. B) Gently pull any excess skin and coat down and out from under the neck strap.

**3** Neck strap must be snug so only one finger can fit under it, and it cannot rotate around the neck. If the neck strap rotates, so will the nose loop, which may cause chafing of the skin. (Fig. C)

**4** Remove the headcollar neck strap and prepare to fit the nose loop. Pull the nose loop up through the centerbar ring. Be ready with some tasty treats. (Fig. D)

**5** Hold the nose loop open and feed a treat through the loop. You want to encourage your dog to place his nose through the loop by offering a treat. (Fig. E)

**6** Snap neck strap high on the neck at its pre-fitted position. Make final adjustment to nose loop by sliding the snap clamp up or down to adjust. (Fig. F) With thumb and index finger, pinch nose loop underneath the snap clamp, temporarily holding it.

**7** Test fit the nose loop by pulling it forward. (Fig. G) When it touches the beginning of the fleshy part of the nose, but is not so loose that you can pull it off the nose, close snap clamp by pressing down on tab — you'll hear a snap as it locks. (Fig. H) Connect leash to "O" ring.

**8** Final Fit - When properly fitted and viewed from the side, the headcollar will resemble a "V" (Fig. I) and the center bar will rest above the tracheal area (Fig. J).

### Fitting Checklist:

- ☐ Neck Strap
  - ☐ Snug fit
  - ☐ Does not rotate
  - ☐ Positioned just behind the ears
- ☐ Nose Loop
  - ☐ Cannot be pulled or rubbed off by the dog
  - ☐ Loose enough for dog to freely open his mouth
  - ☐ Snap Clamp closed completely

**NOTE:** When your dog has reached full growth, you can remove any excess length of neck strap. With the headcollar off your dog, cut the end of strap with scissors and use a match or lighter flame to seal the cut edge to prevent fraying. Be careful not to remove too much of the strap.

Check the fit regularly. There is no need to unsnap the nose loop clamp unless the fit of the Gentle Leader Headcollar needs to be adjusted. To remove the Gentle Leader, simply unsnap the neck strap and slide the nose loop off of your dog's nose.

**CAUTION** Follow instructions carefully when fitting and using on bulldogs and other breeds with genetically limited airways or flat noses. It is typical for these dogs to frequently experience breathing difficulties when exercising or under stress because of their physically limited airways. If their usual breathing difficulties increase when wearing the headcollar, immediately discontinue use and consult your veterinarian.