

HOW TO GUIDE...

# MUZZLE MAGIC



K9-CONDUCT



## INTRODUCTION

# LET'S TALK MUZZLE

Muzzle training is required for multiple different types of dog for different reasons. Some of these reasons can be to do with safety of the dog and others, to stop them eating items they find on walks, the law, to keep vets safe from anxious dogs, as a safety net in unfamiliar situations and so many more reasons.



A muzzled dog is not  
a bad dog.

# WHICH MUZZLE IS BEST FOR ME?

## The different types of muzzle

There are two main types of muzzles...

- Basket
- Soft muzzle

As this guide is aimed at helping XL bully owners prepare for the future we are going to discuss basket muzzles.

Basket muzzles allow your dog to pant, drink and take food. These are ideal for wearing when out walking.

You do not want to get a soft muzzle for your dog for going out walking as it takes away the ability to pant which is vital for your dog to be able to control body temperature.

## Best muzzle for an XL bully

For many of you it will be difficult to find a muzzle in a shop that will correctly fit your XL bully.

You can buy a muzzle from a shop if you want to practice muzzle training in the home as soon as possible, but this likely won't be suitable for walks or extended periods of wearing.

The main measurements you will want to look at are ....

- Length of muzzle
- Width of muzzle , cheek to cheek.
- Height of muzzle, does it allow panting.

# FINDING THE PERFECT FIT

## The perfect fit

- When the muzzles straps are done up, it should be snug but not tight. If they are loose the muzzle will move and could rub and create sores on your dogs face. If it is too tight, it can also cause sores and be uncomfortable for the dog.
- There should be a gap between the muzzle basket and your dogs nose, about 1cm, you don't want your dogs nose pressed up against the end as one this is uncomfortable and two they will not enjoy wearing a muzzle if its constantly compacting their face.
- PANT ROOM this is super important, especially as your dogs will be needing to wear muzzles on walks. Ensure that your dog can pant and open their mouth to drink and eat. If your dog has no room to pant they will overheat on walks.
- Does your muzzle allow enough depth that you can fit two fingers under your dogs jaw?
- Obviously they won't be able to hold a tennis ball in their mouth while wearing a muzzle but that's the kind of space you need for your dog to have a safe amount of space in the muzzle.

# LETS START TRAINING

## FIRST STAGE

### POSITIVE ASSOCIATION

If you want your dog comfortable wearing a muzzle in public , creating a positive association in the home is the first step.

remember different dogs will learn at different paces, don't compare yourself , just keep putting in the work.



- Get some of your dogs food , treats ready for a little training session.
- Hold the muzzle in one hand and have access to food in the other hand. As soon as your dog sniffs or shows interest in the muzzle, say yes and reward. Repeat .
- The aim here is to get the dog associating the muzzle with something good....food.

Now your dog should be seeing the muzzle and thinking this is great, when it comes out I get food!

now its time to extend the time your dog pays attation to the muzzle. In the first step we are saying yes and food comes as soon as we say 'yes'. Now when your dog shows interest in the muzzle hold the 'yes' a couple of seconds longer as we start to increase the time your dog shows contact on the muzzle.



# FIRST STAGE STEP BY STEP

- Get some food ready and get the dogs muzzle.
- Place the muzzle on the floor or hold it, whenever your dog goes near it , smells it , shows interest in it .... mark by saying 'yes' ( or your chosen marker word) & reward.
- Repeat.
- Once your dog is getting more confident with the muzzle, hold the muzzle and repeat steps above starting to get them to hold there nose on the muzzle for a couple of seconds before rewarding .
- Each dog is different some dogs may be happy to put there nose into the muzzle on day one, some will need time to adjust. For now we just want them to show interest, we are not worrying about it being on them yet.
- Repeat these steps for short five minute sessions, one to two times a day until your dog is confident with the muzzle being out.



# SECOND STAGE

## Getting the nose in the muzzle.

Now your dog should associate the muzzle with a positive, it's time to start working on the muzzle actually being on the dog. There are a couple of ways to get your dog used to his nose being in the muzzle. Every dog has different motivators and confidence levels so find the way that works best for you.

### Method one

- Put a small amount of food into the muzzle, on the edge of the opening to begin with.
- Present the muzzle to your dog , so they can get the food from the edge of the muzzle.
- If they do well with this put the food a bit further up the muzzle so the nose needs to go in further to get the food.
- Repeat.
- If your dog becomes hesitant , take it back a step.
- We do not need the dogs to hold in position at this point, we are just getting them used to there nose being in there.

### Method two

- If your dog is more confident this method is great.
- Hold out the muzzle so the opening is towards your dog.
- Hold food on the outside on the end of the muzzle so your dog has to put their nose in to get the food.
- As soon as your dog puts their nose in the muzzle reward from the end of the muzzle.
- Let them release and repeat.

### Method three

- This method is for the more confident dogs. Free shaping.
- Hold out the muzzle, mark yes and reward when the dog goes towards the opening.
- Each time the dog goes to the opening wait for them to be a bit further up before marking and rewarding.
- This should lead to your dog offering their nose into the muzzle fully to get a reward.
- The next time you do this , you should hold the muzzle and let the dog work out what you want from them, which is snout in the muzzle. Let them think and try to work it out, if they struggle you can help them by guiding them with first steps again.

***These steps take it up a level as the dog is now getting rewarded for a more challenging task, putting their nose into a muzzle rather than just touching.***



# SECOND STAGE STEP BY STEP: METHOD ONE

- Put a small amount of food into the muzzle, on the edge of the opening to begin with.
- Present the muzzle to your dog , so they can get the food from the edge of the muzzle.
- Once they have done this a couple of times place the food further into the muzzle so the dog is getting used to their nose being inside.
- Once your dog is happy to put their nose into the muzzle, hold food on the outside of the muzzle and hold it up to your dog, when their nose is in the muzzle , feed them the reward from the outside of the muzzle.
- Repeat.
- We recommend doing this step for a few days to get your dog comfortable with having the nose in the muzzle, some dogs will be happier than others with this so take it at your dogs pace.
- If your dog becomes hesitant , take it back a step.
- We do not need the dogs to hold in position at this point, we are just getting them used to there nose being in there.





# THIRD STAGE

## **Introducing straps and time the dog is in the muzzle.**

By now your dog should look forward to the muzzle coming out and be able to happily put their nose into the muzzle. So the next stage is to introduce the straps at the back as well as working on the amount of time your dogs in the muzzle. It's important with this to go at a slow pace , especially if your dog isn't sure.

- Offer the muzzle so your dog puts their nose in fully and reward.
- Do this a couple of times as a warm up.
- Now when your dog puts their nose in the muzzle , move the straps round the back of the head and reward.
- Repeat.
- Once your dog is comfortable with this, hold the straps behind their head longer while you are rewarding the dog.
- Slowly increase the time your holding the straps round the back of your dogs head and reward while the straps stay there a few times.
- This should lead to you're dog being unphased by the straps being on the back of there head.
- Don't do them up yet this is the next stage.



# THIRD STAGE STEP BY STEP

- Offer the muzzle so your dog puts their nose in fully & reward. This is a warm up.
- Next when your dog puts nose into muzzle, move straps and reward.
- Repeat.
- Next when your dog puts the nose into the muzzle, move straps to back of head and reward. Repeat.
- Once your dog is comfortable with this, hold the straps behind their head while you are rewarding the dog.



# FOURTH STAGE

Now your dog is happy in the muzzle with the straps going over the head, its time to work on closing the muzzle straps.

- Get your dog to put nose into muzzle then reward.
- Get your dog to put nose in muzzle , put straps round the back of head and reward.
- Get your dog to put nose in muzzle, do the strap up. reward. undo strap and repeat.
- Do this a few times to get your dog comfortable with the strap being done up for a few seconds at a time.
- When your dog is comfortable with this, do the strap up and reward , but don't undo the strap
- Pause for a few seconds and reward again. repeat.
- Slowly increase the duration of the session and time between rewards.
- Once your dog is comfortable with this, start getting them in movement with the muzzle on. Turn it into a fun training session ask them to sit, then come and reward. get them off lead heeling with you around the house and rewarding.
- The training isn't over just because you can do the straps up.
- Keep sessions short and sweet, this gives your dog time to process and continue seeing it as a positive.



# FIFTH STAGE

This is the last stage of muzzle training your dog. In this stage we cover how to start getting them outside and being comfortable. It's important to start with little and often and slowly increase the duration and activity your dog is doing whilst wearing a muzzle. Although they may be comfortable with it on them , it helps them adjust if it's little and often.

- By now your dog should be happy being in a muzzle round the house, doing little training sessions for short periods of time.
- Next step is to start taking them outside on walks.
- Do not go out for a walk and expect them to wear it the whole time.
- Do start the walk in the muzzle, continue to reward outside , then take off after a few minutes the first few walks.
- Each day add a bit of time to how long the muzzle is on outside.
- You can even start with the muzzle on, take it off on the walk so they have some free time and then put it back on half way through the walk.
- This is a great way to get your dog to adjust to being in a muzzle outside on walks.



# TIPS & TRICKS

## **Signs your dog is uncomfortable.**

If your dog starts to do any of the following during training, end the session and keep it short as these are signs your dog is not comfortable.

- Licking their lips.
- Moving away from the muzzle.
- Whale eye, showing the whites of their eyes as they look to the side.
- Excessive panting and drooling.

Your dog can still be muzzle trained but they will need short sessions more often and to not be rushed. This will help keep it a positive experience.

Your dog is likely going to need to be muzzled every walk so we want them to enjoy it not find it scary.

## **How long should I spend on each step?**

This is honestly down to your dog, not you. Some dogs are more confident than others and will not be phased by the muzzle. Some will need to spend a few days to a week just getting used to it coming out.

Keep sessions little and often, at the start aim for two 5 minute muzzle training sessions. Making sure your dog is rewarded for all interaction with the muzzle. This can slowly increase, as your dogs confidence around the muzzle grows. If the session is too long your dog may lose interest, so set them up for success by keeping it short and productive.

Majority of dogs require a couple of days getting used to the muzzle before we think about asking them to put their nose in.

## **What not to do.**

Do not expect too much too soon from your dog. Although this may seem like a long winded process, 10 mins out of your day everyday to set your dog up to be happy and comfortable is nothing.

# TOUBLE SHOOTING

## **My dog doesn't like the sound of clips/buckle doing up.**

You need to desensitize them to the sound of clips behind their ears. You can take the clips of the muzzle and do sessions just clipping and rewarding when they are not on the dog. Slowly get them closer to your dog and reward when they do up or make a noise.

## **My dog doesn't want to take food when the muzzle is done up.**

You may need to go back a few steps. Dogs normally stop taking food when they are uncomfortable with something, in this case it is probably the muzzle on their face for too long. Spend time working on the nose being in the muzzle without it being done up.

## **My dog is freaking out if I get the muzzle out now.**

If your dog is running away from the muzzle you probably moved to quickly with the training. Remember you have time to get them comfortable and this will benefit them in the long run. Go back to the beginning to create a positive association. It's likely your dog will be in a muzzle every day soon... spend 5 mins a day everyday doing muzzle training now to help them adjust. Also make sure the muzzle is the correct fit for the dog, if they are uncomfortable it will make it unpleasant for them.

## **How long will it take to muzzle train my dog.**

Majority of dog will adjust to a muzzle anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. This is dependent on your dogs personality aswell as how often you train.