

# Pulling on the Lead

Dogs pull on the lead for many different reasons, but the main one is usually that we inadvertently reward them for doing it!! It can start from when we take our puppy out for their first walk.

Most dogs tend to get excited when they see the lead as it means 'walkies'. You put the lead on. He pulls you to the front door. Then down the garden path. The dog pulls all the way to the park and what do we do when we get to the park? We let him off the lead!! From your dogs' point of view, he has been rewarded for pulling you all the way to the park.

Unfortunately pulling on the lead is so rewarding for dogs that it is not something they grow out of. Indeed, the more opportunities they get to pull, the better they become at it!!

So in order to correct your dog's behaviour, or prevent it from happening in the first place if you have a young puppy, the secret is that we need to make it more rewarding for the dog to walk nicely beside you than it is to pull.

- To do this you will need plenty of tasty food treats. If you use a clicker this can be a very useful training aid.
- Position your dog at your side by luring him with a treat- it doesn't matter if it is your left or right hand side but be consistent in your approach to prevent the zig-zagging.
- If the lead is slack, move forward and REWARD or click and treat - even if it is only 2 or 3 steps. Keep eye contact with your dog by using a food lure if necessary and again if the lead is slack move forward and reward. Be generous!
- Any pressure on the lead should immediately be non-rewarded by standing still with your arms into your sides. Get your dog's attention on you and do not move off again until the lead is slack. Repeat this a few times and then stop and have a game.

This exercise needs to be practised when you are not in a hurry to get anywhere and certainly not when your dog has got squirrels in his sights, as the idea is to build on success.

## Training aids for pulling problems

If your dog is truly a persistent puller then using a correctly fitted head- collar such as a Gentle Leader, or a body harness, can give your training a window of opportunity. Consistency is so important in this exercise so this is one way you can try to ensure that your dog never gets the chance to pull. These are training aids however and should always be used in conjunction with the training.

## **Choke/check chains are not necessary and can cause physical and behavioural damage to your dog.**

### Head collars

Head-collars are designed along the same principle as a horse's head collar. They provide the equivalent of power steering for your dog! They need to be fitted properly and some dogs need time to become accustomed to wearing one.

### Body Harnesses

Body harnesses remove pressure from the throat area and can give dogs a feeling of security. Some can be fiddly to get on. The **Walkezee** harness is probably our favourite. It's kind, and it does prevent most dogs from pulling.