

Muzzle training

Tiny De Keuster



Muzzle training

This programme is suitable for dogs that have had negative associations with a muzzle, or where no previous associations with the muzzle have been made.

Principles

- Find a suitable reinforcement for your dog. Food and attention are more practical than toys, as they are useable with a muzzle. Cheese, sausages, chicken, etc., cut into small pieces (0.5 cm) work for most dogs.
- Contexts where a muzzle is indicated must be avoided until the programme is finalized.
- **Proceed to the next step only if the dog shows no signs of stress when offered food.**
- **Never skip one or more steps.**
- **When signs of stress are observed (e.g. licking the nose, yawning or pulling away), training must be taken back to the previous step.**

Sequence

1. Put the muzzle on the floor when the dog is not in the room. Let the dog enter the room and feed treats when he/she is in the vicinity of the muzzle (within about 1 metre).
2. Repeat step 1, but with the treats scattered on the floor up to and around the muzzle.
3. Hold the muzzle in one hand, parallel to your body. Feed treats with the other hand. The muzzle should be kept still in this phase.
4. Extend the hand holding the muzzle by flexing the elbow. Keep the muzzle fixed in this position. Feed treats with the other hand. If the dog shows no signs of stress, try feeding the treats closer and closer to the muzzle.
5. Put treats in the muzzle. You can start by putting them on the brim and then progressively moving them further toward the closed end of the muzzle.
6. Once your dog will willingly put his/her face in the muzzle, do it up for a few seconds, then remove it and offer another treat in the muzzle without doing it up.
7. Repeat step 6 but gradually increase the time with the muzzle on.

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Muzzle training

continued

8. When the dog is comfortable with the muzzle resting on their face, the strap can be done up and the muzzle left on for a short time.
9. Gradually the time wearing the muzzle can be increased in non-threatening circumstances.

! Care must be exercised to watch the dog for overheating since panting is restricted when a muzzle is worn.