



**CDTS**  
Cranbourne Dog  
Training School

*"Positively the best- for you and your dog"*

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## MUZZLE TRAINING

Muzzles are usually associated with stressful events such as visits to the vet. The basis of muzzle training is to teach your dog to have a positive experience in association with the muzzle rather than a negative one. This is done by introducing the muzzle slowly and in non threatening situations and also by using rewards to reinforce positive associations with muzzle wearing.

The type of muzzle that we recommend is the "Baskerville" muzzle. This muzzle allows dogs to breathe easily, and to pant if they need to. It also has the advantage of having an 'open basket' type of structure which is ideal for 'posting' in treats, allowing you to still reward your dog for appropriate behaviour when he or she is wearing the muzzle.

To get your dog used to wearing a muzzle, put a piece of your dog's favourite food or cream cheese in the bottom of the muzzle, and allow your dog to investigate. You should try and encourage your dog to put his nose in the muzzle to take the treat. Do this on a regular basis until the dog views the muzzle as something to get food out of. Then use several treats in the bottom to encourage your dog to keep his nose in for a longer period of time. Once your dog is happy to eat/lick food out for at least 5 – 10 seconds, start to introduce the sensation of the straps touching the side of your dog's face. Do not attempt to fasten the muzzle yet! Once your dog gets used to this second stage you can get him used to holding his nose in the muzzle and have you hold the muzzle on his nose with one hand and feed him treats from the outside with the other.

Your next step is to fasten the muzzle loosely and feed your dog through the muzzle while you do so. Over a period of days start to tighten the muzzle behind the ears, feeding regularly while you do so. Do not leave your dog unattended with the muzzle on in case he tries to scratch it off.

Eventually, the muzzle must be tight enough for your dog not to be successful in getting it off his nose. If he ever manages to do this, he'll attempt to get it off time and time again. When fitted properly you should be able to get one or two fingers between the muzzle and the back of the neck. To test the fit gently get hold of the end of the muzzle and pull, if it is able to slip off the nose it's too loose!

Keep repeating this exercise, but on each occasion leave the muzzle on for a little longer. Gradually the dog will get used to wearing the muzzle. It is a good idea to use the word "Muzzle" as you put the muzzle on, as your dog will associate this with the action.

Try not to put the muzzle on at the same time or place every day, or your dog could start to anticipate it. Put the muzzle on, and take it off again, at different times of the day, and in different locations. Sometimes it's easier to get your dog accustomed to the muzzle whilst going for a walk in order to build a positive association between the muzzle and the walk. If on the walk your dog tries to scrabble at his face to pull it off, use verbal encouragement to get him to continue walking and if necessary use the lead to gently lift his head up as otherwise he could end up scratching himself.