

~Animal Behavior~

counseling services

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1. You will need to buy a wire basket muzzle. The other types (ex. soft canvas) are not safe for any, extended period of time due to risks of overheating. Your dog should be able to open its mouth for panting drink water, and take treats while wearing the muzzle. You can purchase a muzzle at Dog Talk 614-792-6331), or through the Foster's & Smith catalog (1-800-826-7206). Morroco Pet Supply (morroco.com/1-800-575-1451) also sells basket muzzles for "difficult to fit" dogs (ex. very small, very large, flat nosed).
2. Begin by letting your dog explore the muzzle. You can leave it about the house, and even place a treat inside so that it can be found whenever your dog happens to approach the muzzle. Watch that your dog is not chewing on the leather straps. If this is the case just make it available during supervised periods.
3. Turn the muzzle upright & feed your dog from it as if it were a cup. Hold the straps back out of the way. If you do not have time, just lay it beside the food dish so that it will be associated with every bite.
4. Begin practicing the "muzzle up" command. Ask your dog to sit, then present the muzzle with a long narrow treat stuck through the end ("pupperoni" treats, or peanut butter on a spoon work well), and say, "muzzle up". Again, be sure you keep the straps from flipping up and startling your dog. Allow your dog to stick his/her own nose down into the muzzle, as long as they keep their nose in the muzzle they can earn treats. Repeat the process if they remove their snout from the basket. It is critical that your dog be relaxed and comfortable through out muzzle training. Only progress to the next level if this is the case, and be prepared to return to a previous step if needed. Most dogs will be running to their owner when they see the muzzle, and enthusiastically pushing their snouts into the basket after one week of the above training. If your dog needs more time, allow it. If your dog is very relaxed after only a couple days, still stay at this level for a full week so that a very positive association will be made with the muzzle.
5. Continue to periodically do the above exercises, but also begin to touch and move the straps over your dogs head during the "muzzle up" exercise. Typically dogs will allow you to buckle the muzzle, finish giving the treat, and then quickly remove the basket by the end of the second week of training. If your dog is rubbing, pawing or avoiding the muzzle you have progressed too rapidly. If you are having any trouble please call the office so that we can trouble shoot the process.
6. Continue to do the above exercises, but also begin to elongate the amount of time your dog can stay in the muzzle while kept VERY busy. Try asking your dog to do many quickly paced commands, giving him a click & a treat for each. As time goes on you will be able to be less active and still keep the attention away from the muzzle.
7. Continue to do the above exercises, and also do fun activities in the muzzle like playing games, walking, riding in the car etc. Know your dog, and be sure it is a very favored activity, be creative.
8. Typically after four to six weeks of training most dogs are able to wear their muzzles comfortably about the house with out much, if any, owner distraction. You should still go back to remedial practices periodically that keep your dog accustomed to wearing the muzzle.

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