

Head Halters for Dogs

By Sherry Woodard

What is a head halter?

A head halter for dogs is similar to a horse halter – there are straps around the nose and behind the ears. The dog's lead is attached to a ring at the bottom of the nose strap. Dogs can eat, drink, pant, and bark while wearing a halter.



What is a head halter used for?

A head halter is used to give you more control when you're walking your dog. When you use a head halter, it's much easier to train your dog to walk nicely on lead, without pulling. Head halters are completely humane. Some brand names are Gentle Leader and Halti.

According to the Gentle Leader documentation, the halter works with the dog's instincts. Dogs will follow their noses, so the lead attached to the nose loop (instead of the neck) allows you to gently guide the dog's direction. And the pressure at the back of the neck from the second loop simulates how a mother dog handles her puppies.

The result in many cases is a calmer, more focused dog. If your dog is aggressive, you will have better control of his head if he wears a halter, but a halter is not a muzzle – the dog can still bite.

How should it fit?

All halters should come with wearing instructions. Make sure you fit the halter properly to your dog. The neck strap sits just behind the ears, high on the neck. The configuration of the nose strap may differ slightly, depending on the brand, but it should be adjusted so that it cannot slide off the end of the dog's nose. Make sure the attachment ring (to which you attach the lead) is under the dog's chin.

How will my dog react?

When you put the halter on for the first time, your dog will probably try to get it off by pawing at it. The best thing you can do is get him moving – start walking and keep him walking to divert his attention from the foreign object on his head. Praise him and offer small treats to distract him from pawing and rubbing. Soon, you will be enjoying a nice walk without pulling. Head halters work without using lead corrections – there's no jerking needed!

Finally, do not leave a halter on your dog if he is unsupervised. He might catch the halter on something and injure himself.

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