



## Lincoln Land Animal Clinic, Ltd.

Animal Behavior Services

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### Muzzle or Basket Muzzle Training

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**Lesson description:** Your dog will learn to approach and stick their nose in the muzzle. Then you will teach your dog that the buckling of the muzzle is a good thing. Your dog should accept the muzzle willingly and enthusiastically. The muzzle should be viewed by the dog as a wonderful opportunity for treats- not punishment.

#### Training preparation:

- Before beginning, make sure you have a variety of treats, including those that are gooey or can be licked.
- Throughout the training process, please keep in mind, only good things happen when the muzzle appears.

#### The training:

1. Remove muzzle from cabinet and hold it up for the dog to see. Prevent your dog from sticking their nose in it.
2. Place several kibbles in the bottom of the basket muzzle.
3. Offer the kibbles in the muzzle, when the dog finishes the kibble remove the muzzle and refill.
4. Repeat until meal is finished.
5. Once the dog is excited and running to you when you pull out the muzzle proceed to step 6.
6. As dog is eating out of muzzle slowly raise the strap over the back of neck.
  - a. How far to raise the strap is determined by the dog's comfort level.
  - b. The goal is to raise the strap to the point that the dog does not move backward, stop eating or "resist" in any way.
  - c. Repeat each level several times before proceeding. Begin by just barely raising the strap, to laying it across the back of the neck.
7. Once you have the strap laying across the back of the neck, then you will gently hold the end close to the buckle without actually buckling it. Repeat.
8. Then slowly start to buckle the muzzle. Slip the holed edge into one side of the buckle, but do not buckle it- repeat
9. Then put the strap through both sides of the buckle- repeat.
10. Once the dog is comfortable allowing you to strap the muzzle on, feed squeeze cheese, kong paste, or some other squeezable treat through the basket. The treat stops when the muzzle comes off. Repeat.
11. Practice putting the muzzle on at different times of the day for short periods of time.
12. By the time you are at step 10 you should not have to put kibble in the bottom to get the dog to want to put their nose in the muzzle. However if you are having difficulty

- buckling the strap, a little goo (kong paste, peanut butter, or squeeze cheese smeared on the bottom might make it easier for you and keep your dog happy).
13. Next work on duration or the length of time the dog has the muzzle on.
    - a. Gradually increase the length of time the muzzle is on. Treat intermittently.
    - b. You do not want to keep the muzzle on until the dog fusses and tries to get it off.
      - i. If the dog fusses, ask for a different behavior (sit, down, come or some other trick the dog really enjoys) to redirect the fussing before removing the muzzle.
    - c. Ideally if you can see that the dog might fuss, redirect, and treat. This should occur before fussing.
    - d. If you use a clicker, this is an opportunity to click calm behavior.
  14. Once your dog is able to keep the muzzle on for a longer period of time, then add some distractions and distance.

**Things to consider:**

- If your dog needs a muzzle because it bites you, you need a way to deliver the treats so that you do not get bitten.
- If your dog is food aggressive (bites when food is around) it is important to use a different technique.
- It is important to avoid doing things that would require your dog wearing a muzzle for unpleasant things until after the dog is trained to love the muzzle.
- Basket muzzles are more comfortable for dogs to wear for longer periods of time.
- Change your perception- think of it as a treat basket.
- When your dog is wearing a muzzle it should be viewed as a safety measure. It is NOT a license to do things to your dog that you would not do if the muzzle was not present. Train your dog to accept handling. Using a muzzle to "do what you want and have your way" will defeat the purpose of this training.
- Always respect your dog's body language.