

Basket Muzzle Training for a Safer and Calmer Visit to the Vet

Rule #1 BASKET MUZZLE ≠ CHARACTER FLAW

Trips to the veterinary clinic are famous for triggering a stress response in our patients. Unfamiliar territory and people, and the scent of other animals (including possible predators) can easily be perceived as threats. As mammals, both humans and animals have a physiologic response to stress that can elicit adaptive behavioral responses, commonly known as fight, freeze, or flight responses.

Add an uncomfortable or painful procedure like a rectal thermometer or an injection and you can see how easily a “freeze” response could turn into a “fight” response.

While most initial aggressive reactions are warnings, the sobering reality is that dogs are well equipped anatomically to do serious disfiguring or life threatening damage.

Some dogs are better equipped than others to do significant harm. Also, some dogs perceive threats more quickly and intensely than others. These are the patients that, although they are wonderful companions and family members, may decide to defend themselves in the veterinary clinic setting or resist handling and treatments. Sometimes these dogs need to be sedated even for simple procedures like collecting a blood sample or trimming nails.

With simple training to a basket muzzle, dogs with the above tendencies will often tolerate uncomfortable situations and procedures while taking treats through the muzzle. By decreasing the element of risk to the staff and handlers, the atmosphere remains calm and fun.

Rule #2 BASKET MUZZLE = TREAT DISPENSER

The easiest way to get your dog accustomed to wearing a basket muzzle is to introduce it as a device they can stick their snout in to get a treat. You can offer treats to your dog through the muzzle on a regular basis and gradually work up to the sensation of the strap behind the ears, in very small increments, always removing it *before* they start to resent it. Eventually, the goal is to have them associate the muzzle with tasty good times, taking treats through the muzzle, tolerant of the weird thing on their nose. This way, you can practice an important skill that will allow you to place a muzzle on your dog with minimal stress, which could be essential for providing urgent care to your pet, especially for potentially painful procedures like cleaning a wound or examining a painful part of the body.

The basket muzzle we recommend is the **Baskerville Ultra**. <https://companyofanimals.us/brand-product/baskerville-ultra-muzzle/> Be sure to follow the sizing recommendations.

Another basket muzzle to consider if the Baskerville doesn't seem right for your dog is the **JAFCO** muzzle. <https://www.jafcomuzzles.com/> Be sure to follow the sizing recommendations.

For a more detailed approach to basket muzzle training check out:

<https://muzzleupproject.com>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FABgZTFvHo>