

**Muzzle training - if you wish to give this a go**

Muzzle training is not a bad thing dogs can often be in situations where they are in pain and a dog that is used to wearing a muzzle will be more comfortable receiving treatment.

The Baskerville muzzle basket style muzzle is the best kind of muzzle allowing the dog to pant, drink and eat through it.

The other type of custom muzzle is BUMAS muzzle, they are available at the following link; <https://www.bumas.uk/frontpage>.

* To start with, hold the muzzle in your hands with a treat in it (close to the edge of the muzzle to begin with) and see if your dog will approach. Let it take treats out of it without doing anything else. Do this a number of times so it’s happy going to the muzzle and eating out of it. Gradually move the treats further down towards the bottom of the muzzle, so it has to put it’s nose in the muzzle to get the treat.
* Increase the length of time your dog holds its nose in the muzzle by feeding a longer lasting treat through the front part of the muzzle. Try to always make sure that you move away from your dog with the muzzle, rather than towards them, so that it is most definitely their choice to put their nose in the muzzle.
* Once your dog is relaxed with putting their nose in the muzzle and holding it there, you can progress to lifting the straps but not doing them up and letting go straight away.
* The next stage will be to put the straps loosely around your dogs head, so that it gets used to the feel of the muzzle and she is comfortable with having it in this position, and let go of the straps again.
* If you rush this process and fasten up the muzzle too quickly, your dog will learn to avoid this situation and move away from you when they see the muzzle, or worse, if you force them, they might resort to aggression. So take this process very slowly.
* Eventually when your dog is happy holding their nose in the muzzle with you also holding the straps loosely, you can then begin to buckle the fastener and then undo it straight away
* Gradually leave the muzzle on for increasing periods of time. Start with a few seconds, and then increase the duration to a minute, then two minutes, then three and so on.
* If at any point you don’t think your dog is not comfortable or relaxed when they has the muzzle on then go back to a stage at which they are relaxed and take things even more slowly. We want the muzzle to always be associated with a positive emotional state for your dog.

• The next stage will be to put the muzzle on your dog on at random points during the day and for short periods of time so that it becomes a normal occurrence.

• If your dog ever paws at the muzzle during the training or tries to get it off you have moved on too quickly. If this happens wait until your dog stops pawing (or make a distraction to stop them) and then take the muzzle off (if you take it off whilst your dog is pawing they may learn to do it more). Next time go back a stage or two with your training and build up more slowly.

The Blue Cross have an excellent muzzle training video which is available at the following link; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BjPpXer8IE>. I can highly recommend watching this video as it details the later stages of muzzle training.