

# Dog: Head Halters and Harnesses



Why using an anti-pull device like a head halter or front-buckle harness is a great idea:

- To prevent your dog from pulling on leash in a humane and natural way
- To better control large, strong dogs regardless of your own size and strength

**Note:** Never use choke chains or prong collars. They inflict pain and can permanently damage your dog's trachea.

## Head Halters

A head halter (like Gentle Leaders, Haltis, etc.) is a humane anti-pull collar. It works by letting you steer the dog's head—the same principle used for leading around large animals like horses. A head halter is made up of two straps: one that goes around the dog's head (head strap) and one that goes around the dog's nose (nose loop).

Fitting a dog with a Gentle Leader:

**Step 1.** Collar and leash the dog, and then step on the leash.

**Step 2.** Open the neck strap and hold one end in each hand. The nose loop should hang down like the letter T.

**Step 3.** Fit the head strap so it goes snugly around the dog's head just behind the ears. The ring attached to the nose loop should be parallel to the neck, not the underside of the jawbone. The head strap should be snug enough that only one finger can squeeze under it.

**Step 4.** Take the head strap off the dog.

**Step 5.** Pull the nose loop up through the ring, encourage the dog to stick his nose through the nose loop, and then snap on the already fitted head strap (closing the buckle right behind the dog's ears).

**Step 6.** Adjust the nose loop. It should be behind the corners of the mouth and loose enough to pull forward to the wet part of the nose, but not so loose that it can be pulled entirely off the dog's muzzle.

For step-by-step instructions on how to get your dog to enjoy wearing and walking on the Gentle Leader, see our website and/or our handout *Head Halter Exercises*.

## Front-Buckle Harnesses

Front-buckle harnesses (like SofTouch's SENSE-ation harness and Premier Easy Walk Pet harness) are humane anti-pull devices. A harness is essentially made up of three straps: One that sits across the dog's back (back strap), one that goes under the stomach right behind the forelegs (girth strap), and one that goes across the chest (chest strap).

Fitting a dog with a harness:

**Step 1.** Collar and leash the dog, and then step on the leash.

**Step 2.** Adjust the back strap to raise the side rings until they sit midway on the dog's sides (halfway between the back and the belly).

**Step 3.** Adjust the girth strap to a snug fit, like a comfortable belt.

**Step 4.** Reach under the dog with your left hand, grasp the girth strap, and buckle it.

## Dog: Head Halters and Harnesses *(continued)*

**Step 5.** Check for comfort room, i.e. that you can easily get one finger under the strap when the dog sits.

**Step 6.** Adjust both sides of the chest strap to place the leash ring over the breastbone. Don't over-adjust! It's better to have the chest strap a bit loose than too tight. The chest straps should be horizontal only when the dog sits or is on leash.

General rule of thumb: The dog should mainly feel the back and girth straps.

To see images of how to fit a front-buckle harness, visit our website.