

# DOG REACTIVITY TRAINING

SHELTER NAME Behavior and Training Department 2019

This handout accompanies the SHELTER NAME Dog Reactivity Training lecture. The training details information about the Look At That protocol, muzzles, and Gentle Leaders. For any questions about this information, please contact the SHELTER NAME Behavior and Training Department at CONTACT INFO.

## Leash Reactivity

- Leash reactivity is when a dog behaves in an undesirable manner on leash when he sees a trigger, such as a dog or person. For shelter dog training purposes, we will focus on dogs as the trigger.
- Characterized by hypervigilance, staring, piloerection, whining, barking, growling and lunging (in order of severity).
- Leash reactivity can be broken down into two main causes:
  - The dog wants to interact with the other dog, but is *thwarted* by the leash. The dog may not know how to appropriately greet another dog.
  - The dog experiences extreme stress or fear when seeing another dog and responds with reactivity and aggression in an attempt to make the dog go away.
- Many shelter dogs develop leash reactivity due to the restricted access to other dogs. They can constantly see, smell and hear other dogs, but are not able to freely interact with them.
- **Playgroups can help prevent frustration-induced leash reactivity!**



# Look At That Protocol

## Goals:

- Condition the dog to have a relaxed emotional response to the presence of triggers that cause them to react.
  - This is accomplished through pairing a high-value primary reinforcer with the presence of the trigger (food = primary reinforcer; other dogs = trigger).
  - Counterconditioning is a functional analytic principle that is part of behavior analysis, and involves the conditioning of an unwanted behavior or response to a stimulus into a wanted behavior or response by the association of positive actions with the stimulus.
- Train the dog to look at the trigger and back at you calmly.
  - Operant conditioning is a learning process through which the strength of a behavior is modified by reinforcement or punishment. It is also a procedure that is used to bring about such learning.
  - This is a more advanced goal when implementing the LAT Protocol.



## Steps:

1. Condition a reward marker, such as Yes or a clicker.
2. Outfit the dog in appropriate walking equipment, such as the Gentle Leader head collar, Easy Walk harness, or Freedom No Pull harness.
3. Select an appropriate helper dog. This should be a dog that is non-reactive on leash and easily handled by a second trainer. Ideal helpers are calm and quiet.
4. Remain under threshold. In dog training, a threshold is when the dog goes from one emotional state to another. If you are so close to another dog that your dog begins reacting, you have gone over the threshold. *This varies for each dog and sometimes each training session, depending on distractions and the helper dog.*
5. Mark and reward each time your dog looks at the helper dog.
6. When your dog is reliably looking at the helper dog in a calm manner, begin withholding your marker until the dog looks at the trigger *and* looks back at you.
7. Continue reinforcing in a variety of situations with a variety of helper dogs. *This is called proofing!*

#### Additional Notes:

- Maintain a high rate of reinforcement during the session, but reserve your treats for when you are actively practicing the LAT Protocol. (I.e. Reserve your treats for when the helper dog is present to really make your session count!)
- Ensure your dog has the proper safety straps/clips in place to prevent an accident. We often use couplers, carabiner clips, or a second leash and collar.
- If you are not successful onsite during the session, go offsite with a buddy! Offsite outings are incredibly valuable for reactive dogs. *You might even notice the dog isn't reactive at all offsite!*
- **Ensure you do not use one particular helper dog too frequently, as this may cause stress.**
- Document all of your training in a Care Activity and Memo in Petpoint!

## Muzzles

The Baskerville Ultra muzzle provides security with a forehead strap, safety loop (for collar), and buckle fastener. Feeding can be done through the front or on the sides. Dogs can easily eat, drink, and pant while wearing it.



**When to Use:** To conduct close-contact dog greetings and playgroups with dogs who have a history of strongly reacting to or biting other dogs. This is to ensure the safety of all handlers and dogs involved in the interaction. *If you are unsure if a muzzled dog interaction should be attempted, please see the Behavior and Training Department.*

Fitting:

- The dog's nose should not be touching the end of the basket.
- The dog's lips should not be pressed against the sides.
- The basket should be large enough to allow for panting and drinking.
- The back strap should be snug behind the ears.
- The forehead strap should lay snugly against the forehead.

Desensitization:

1. Place food in the basket of the muzzle. Hold the muzzle out and allow the dog to eat.
2. Repeat.
3. Gradually fit the straps to their appropriate tightness. Reward heavily while doing so.
4. Repeat.
5. You may also wish to use the box that the muzzle came in (we keep these on hand!) as a "bowl." Place the muzzle in the box. Place treats in the basket of the muzzle.
6. Allow the dog to eat the treats from the muzzle and box.
7. Repeat.

**Only continue to the next step if the dog was comfortable and confident with the previous step! This may take several sessions.**

Treat Options for Feeding:

- Spray cheese
- Wet food
- KONG Stuff'N treats (spray)
- Small training treats
- Peanut butter
- Squeeze applesauce, baby food, etc.
- Cake decorator
- Syringe



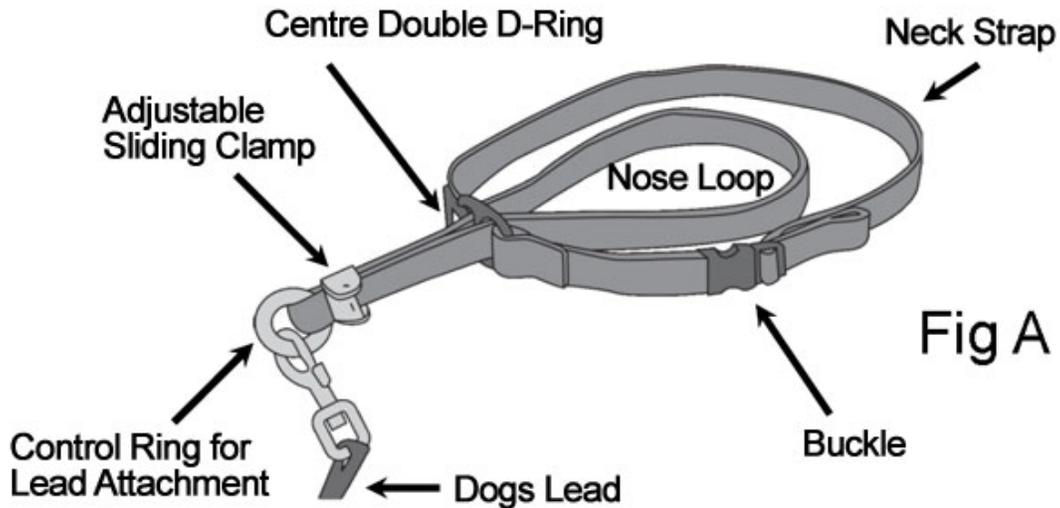
## Gentle Leader

The Gentle Leader head collar is a helpful tool when working with a leash-reactive dog, providing a way for the handler to lead from the dog's head. *Note: The Gentle Leader is **NOT** a muzzle, but can briefly*



close a dog's mouth if the leash is pulled quickly upwards, toward the sky. This handling technique should be reserved for emergencies only.

Diagram:



Fitting Instructions:

1. Secure the neck strap high and snug around the neck, just at the base of the skull.
2. Tighten the strap so that you can fit no more than **one finger** under the loop.
3. Secure the nose loop over the dog's snout, just in front of the eyes and behind the corners of the mouth.
4. Using the sliding clamp, adjust and secure the nose loop so that it does not slide over the dog's nose, but still allows for relaxed panting and drinking.



Desensitization Steps:

1. Begin by placing only the neck strap on the dog and heavily rewarding.
2. Remove and repeat.
3. Lure the dog's snout through the nose loop.
4. Remove and repeat.
5. Place the fitted neck strap and open nose loop on the dog. Reward heavily.
6. Remove and repeat.
7. Place the fitted Gentle Leader on the dog. Reward heavily.
8. Remove and repeat.

**Only continue to the next step if the dog was comfortable and confident with the previous step! This may take several sessions.**

Proper Leash Management & Safety: Always secure the Gentle Leader to a collar or harness with a coupler strap or a carabiner clip. *The coupler is preferred because it does not pull as tightly as the carabiner does.*



*Carabiner clip (orange)*



*Coupler strap (blue)*

