



# Beyond Reactivity

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WHAT YOU  
NEED TO KNOW  
ABOUT  
**Muzzles**  
TRAINING AND MORE



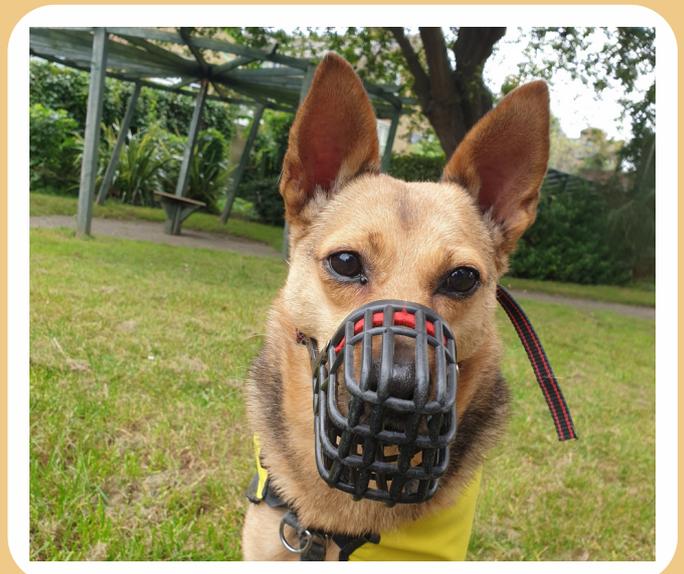


# Why muzzle train?

There are so many reasons to muzzle train a dog, and if you have a reactive dog who you are worried might bite, then using a muzzle when out on walks will significantly reduce this risk and your feelings of worry. Which will in turn help you focus on your dog's training or just have a relaxing walk.

Some dogs have a condition called Pica, this is where they will eat inorganic things, this can be a very dangerous and even fatal condition. Not to mention the vet fees and trauma if a dog needs to be operated on to remove something they have eaten. Pica isn't a lack of training, but a condition that often has underline causes that while being investigated, it is important to keep your dog safe by preventing them from eating non-food items.

In fact in my opinion every single dog should be muzzle trained as part of their basic training. This is because there are so many circumstances where your dog might need to wear one, if they are in pain at the vet they may be muzzled for the veterinary staffs' safety or you may want to travel in Europe with your dog and many European countries require dogs to be muzzled on public transport and if you want to travel between the UK and France by ferry one of the major companies requires dogs to be muzzled when not in a car.





# Muzzles for the vet visit

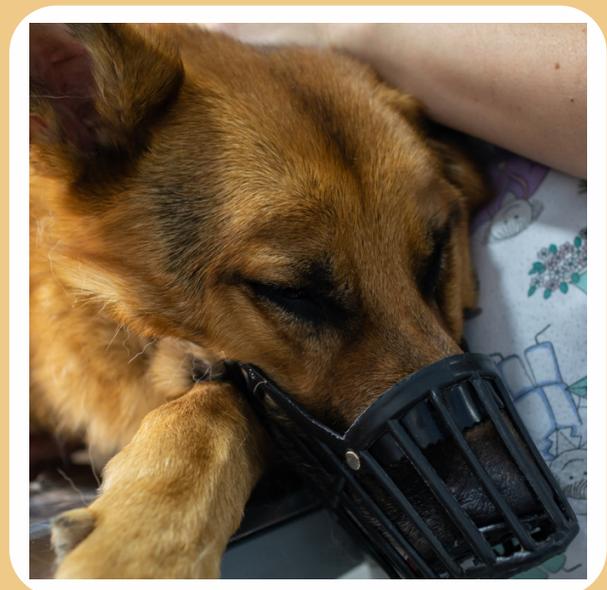
Veterinary surgeries can be scary places for dogs, but urgent and emergency medical treatment is absolutely necessary.

If your dog is fearful and maybe a little unpredictable with their behaviour at vets then for everyone's peace of mind having them wear a muzzle when they visit the vets and are examined can mean everything goes a lot smoother because you are not anxious your dog will bite because the veterinary staff are not nervous of receiving a bite and everyone can focus on your dog's medical needs and creating a calm and safe experience.

There is something to bear in mind, if your dog is nervous of the vets then they can be helped to feel more comfortable in that environment. This will most successfully be achieved with the support of a behaviour counsellor.

If your dog if you think your dog will bite or has already bitten at the vet then it is certainly time to get a professional on board.

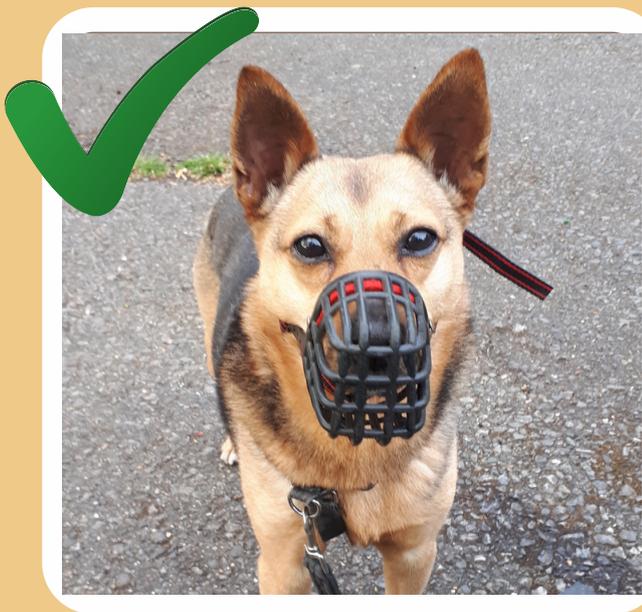
Ideally, we want to help your dog feel comfortable at the vets but often medical needs can't wait and for those that often left when dogs struggle at the vets, the preventative interventions are an important part of your dog's overall care which is why getting help for your dog to feel comfortable at the vets now is so important.





# Type of muzzle matters

The type of muzzle is very important, there are two main types; basket styles muzzles and mesh or material muzzles. The basket style ones are the ones that look like a cage, this often puts people off as they look quite severe but these are the humane muzzles despite their look. This is because a properly fitted basket muzzle allows a dog to breathe properly, pant, drink, and take treats. A mesh muzzle does not allow for any of these things because they hold the dog's mouth closed, which will not only be uncomfortable but is actually very dangerous as dogs release most of their heat through their mouths and often will need to breathe through their mouths even in cold temperatures. Being able to drink is a basic need for your dog so restricting them from being able to do that is restricting a basic need and of course, if you working with your dog's reactivity you do really want to be able to give them yummy treats while they are wearing their muzzle.



Basket style muzzle

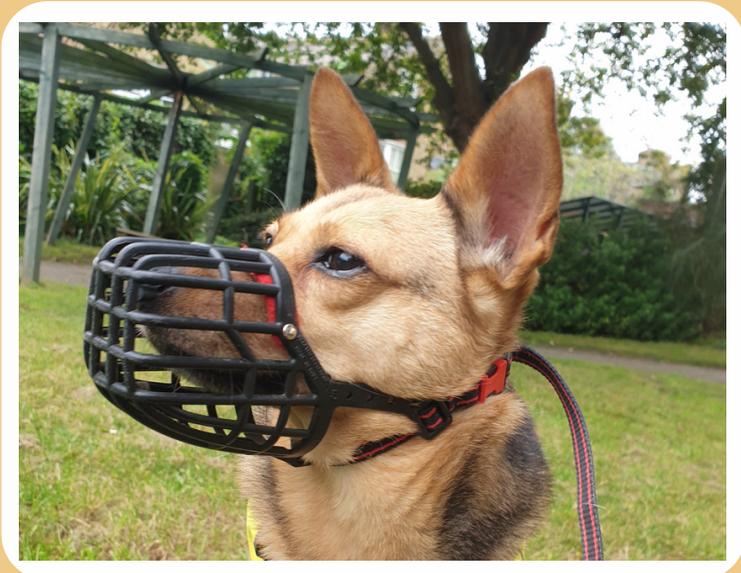


Mesh muzzle



# How to get the right fit of muzzle

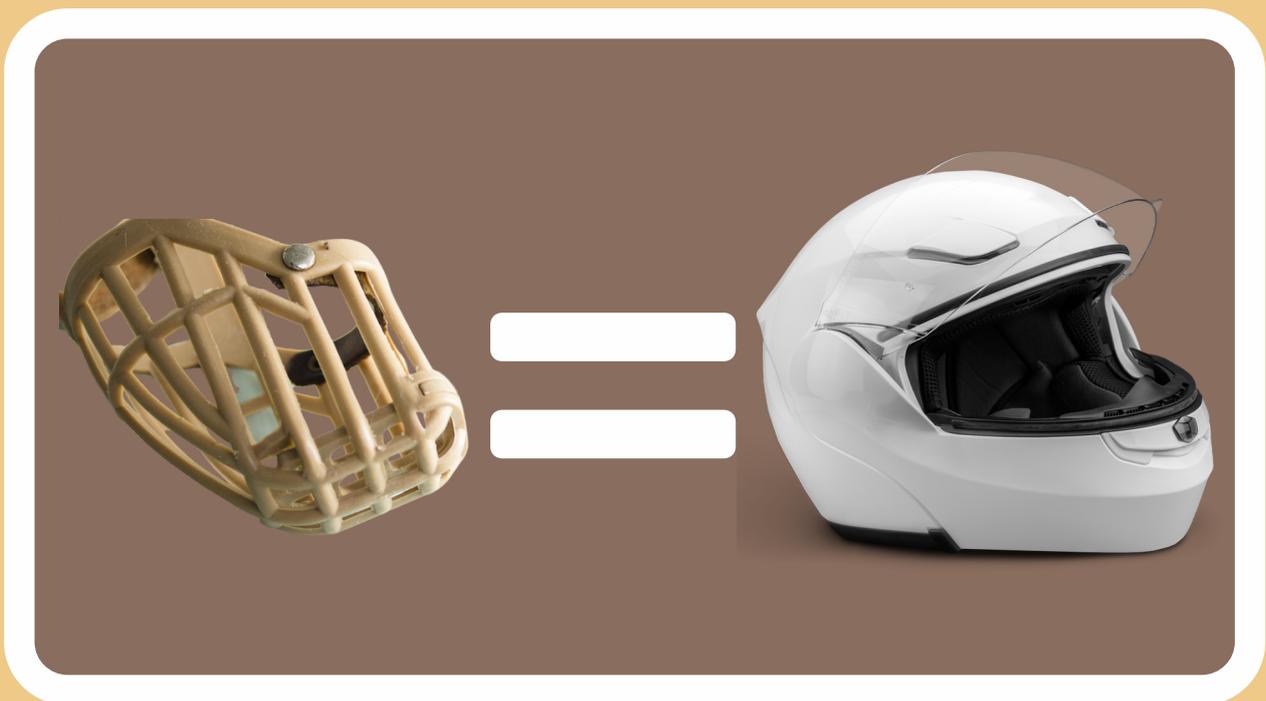
Most brands of muzzles come with recommended sizes for different breeds as well measuring instructions so you can follow these guides. In addition to following these guides your dog's nose should not touch the end of the muzzle, they must be able to pant fully. They should not be able to shake, paw or rub the muzzle off and the straps should be fitted so you can slip one finger under them and the muzzle should not be pressed into any part of their jaw or right up against their eyes.





# What muzzles are NOT for

Muzzles are a great layer of safety, but they are like seat belts and crash helmets. Both seat belts and crash helmets are used in case there is an accident not as a reason to go driving in situations where you are highly likely or guaranteed to have a crash. And the same goes for muzzles, if your dog is reactive to other dogs do not muzzle train them to be able to take them to the dog park, because although muzzles are a great layer of practical safety, your dog reacting in a muzzle will still have all the negative emotions happening at the time, they will still be practising those undesirable behaviours which means those behaviours will be more likely to happen again because practice makes perfect. And they and you will still have to deal with the time it takes for them to emotionally recover and the difficult behaviours that go along with that. And a muzzled dog can still hurt another dog or person.





# How to muzzle train

## Stage one

Familiarise your dog to the muzzle in a positive way

- This could be by incorporating it into enrichment sessions
- Showing your dog the muzzle and giving them a treat (repeat this lots of times)
- Leaving the muzzle on the floor and doing scatter feeding sessions near it

Let your dog interact with the muzzle as much or as little as they want, never force the muzzle towards your dog or your dog towards the muzzle. Only move on to stage two when your dog is 100% comfortable being around the muzzle



## Stage two



Make the muzzle the best food bowl ever

- Put something your dog finds really tasty, preferable something that can be smeared at first just at the top part of the muzzle so your dog does not have to put their face right in and hold it and let your dog lick the tasty stuff out
- Over several training sessions spread the tasty stuff further down the muzzle until it is all the way in the front end of the muzzle
- Keep doing this until your dog is super excited to see the muzzle even when there is no food in it, and eagerly puts their face in it



## Stage 3



### Doing up the straps

- While your dog is eating the tasty stuff from the muzzle, start by gently touching one of the straps and immediately take your hand away
- Gradually build up the length of time you spend holding the strap, if your dog shows any sign of stress or attempts to move away go back a few steps and build up again
- Once your dog is comfortable with you holding the strap gently start moving it into position, but only a little bit at a time and again gradually building moving it to the point where you can do it up
- Repeat the above steps for the other side strap
- Once your dog is completely comfortable with you holding the straps in place do them up, but immediately undo them
- Gradually build up the length of time you leave the straps done up, you can start feeding really tasty treats through the muzzle if the licking stuff has run out.
- Gradually increase the amount of time between giving treats through the muzzle. There is nothing wrong with feeding a few treat every time you put the muzzle on and of course, you will be giving your dog treats out on walks too but at this point, you are ready to slowly stop constantly feeding treats while your dog is wearing their muzzle

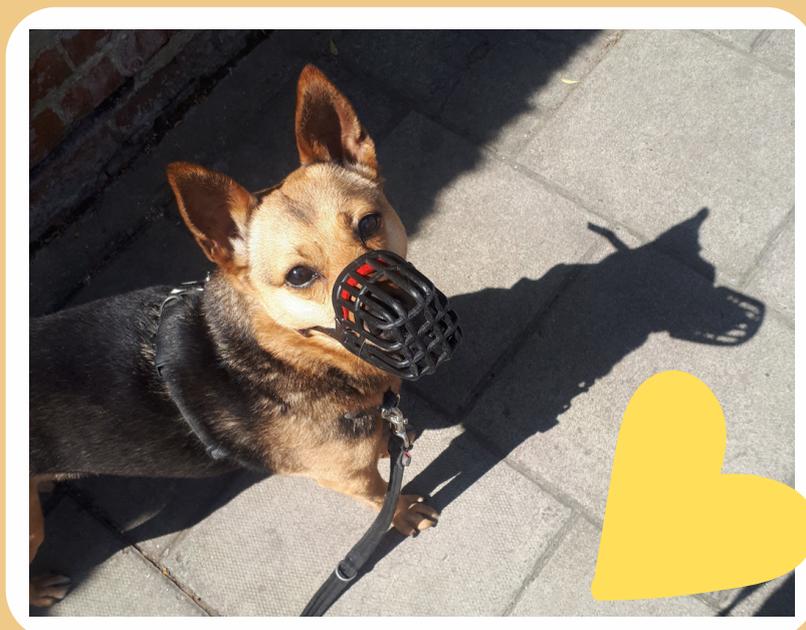
**If your dog resource guards food or items please seek the help of a behaviour counsellor to personally guide you through the muzzle training process.**



# Trouble shooting

If your dog is unsure about walking in their muzzle, mark and reward any and every movement they make, as they start taking steps mark and reward every step, as they increase in confidence mark and reward every other step, then every third and then mark and reward randomly (i.e. 1 step, 3 steps, 2 steps, 4 steps, 1 step ect) until they are confidently walking around in their muzzle.

If your dog is not going to the toilet in their muzzle do take it off to let them go toilet. But this might be because they are not sniffing, so to encourage them to sniff mark and reward even the slightest movement of their head towards the ground and keep marking and rewarding until they are sniffing as they would without the muzzle on.



Happy muzzle training



That's it for now!

But if you found these tips useful why not get in touch with me at <https://www.beyondreactivity.com/contactform> to out how I can help you and your dog move beyond reactivity.



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