

What are dogs wearing these days?

An increasing number of dog owners are debating between a harness and a collar. Which is better for their dog?

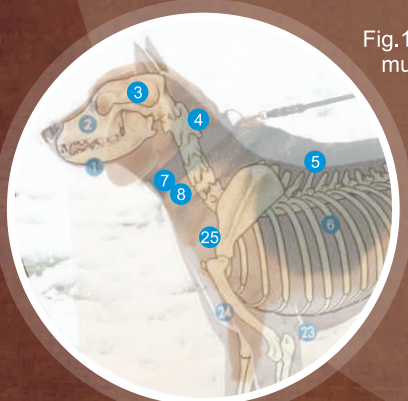
If it were up to the dogs themselves, they would unanimously answer: a harness!

Why?

Drawbacks to wearing a collar:

- Injury to the cervical vertebrae
- Strain and tension to the neck muscles
- Loss of equilibrium (balance problems)
- Injury to the thyroid gland and larynx
- Shortness of breath (which can lead to panic attacks)
- Higher body temperature, heart rate and blood pressure
- Oxygen deficiency in the brain
- Increased intraocular pressure
- Blindness
- Negative impact on inter-canine communication (calming signals can no longer be relayed)
- Negative impact on the dog's ability to perceive the environment
- Changes in behaviour: irritability, nervousness, anxiety and stress
- If you suddenly need to restrain your dog it is more difficult to grab hold of a collar than the broad top strap of a harness

Fig.1: The canine musculoskeletal system



- 3 Skull
- 4 Cervical vertebrae
- 5 Thoracic vertebrae
- 7 Larynx
- 8 Thyroid gland
- 25 Shoulder blade

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WHY IS A HARNESS BETTER THAN A COLLAR?



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Physical injury

caused by wearing a collar.

Tugging on the leash of a dog wearing a collar intentionally - or unintentionally - causes a tug or even a sharp jerk to be given to the neck and throat, which we know today is a highly sensitive area, and can lead to direct injury to this part of his anatomy.

This also has secondary consequences, such as a negative impact on canine behaviour and hormonal balance.

The muscles in the neck and throat area respond reflexively to a tug on the collar (i.e. completely involuntarily) with compensative tension. If this action is frequently repeated, it could cause considerable tension in the neck and throat muscles, leading to headaches and dizziness. The application of severe pressure in opposite directions will exert a powerful shearing force on the vertebral discs of the cervical vertebrae, possibly leading to injuries as severe as herniated intervertebral discs with paralysis symptoms. Pain as intense as this will, in most cases, also be the cause of unwanted changes in behaviour.

The larynx and thyroid gland are located in the upper region of a dog's throat. As the larynx is part of the respiratory tract, a tug on the leash will briefly interrupt the dog's breathing. The dog will cough or make a rasping sound, which frequently leads to laryngitis. Even worse: crushed thyroid tissue will lead to imbalances in the production of hormones in the thyroid gland (Hypothyroidism). The latest developments in veterinary medicine have shown that the thyroid hormones influence important bodily functions such as vascular dilatation, blood pressure, body temperature, the regulatory mechanism of the nervous system, and intestinal activity. If any of these functions are impaired, your dog will suffer from anxiety and encounter adjustment problems.

Another point not to be overlooked is that pressure exerted via the collar on the already tense muscles of the neck and throat also causes a constriction to the blood vessels leading to the brain. The flow of blood to the brain thus impaired will result in an increase in intraocular pressure (fluid pressure on the eye), which could eventually even lead to complete blindness.

Apart from the above medical implications, a tug on the collar will also produce other, more immediate effects.

Tugging on the collar will suddenly and inadvertently alter the position of the dog's head and therefore influence his perception of the environment, and additionally his communication with other dogs. This will trigger fear and inhibit the dog's ability to recognize potential danger, or will confuse other dogs, who may identify his behaviour as aggressive and resort to attack.

Fastening a harness: just as with

a collar, a dog must be trained to wear a harness.

The dog will need to become used to wearing a harness. This should be done in steps. The harness should be linked to positive experiences. It is essential that you observe your dog's calming signals during this and later phases to prevent stress and anxiety.



In the beginning, make sure that your dog wears the harness only briefly and in a situation that he associates with well - being until he can move about freely wearing the harness.



Rewarding

1. Open the belly straps on both sides.
2. Stand to the side of your dog before looping the harness over his head (to prevent him from feeling fenced in).
3. Place your hand through the neckpiece, with a treat in your hand. Hold the top strap of the harness in your other hand.
4. The dog will try to get the treat and put his head through the neckpiece all by himself.
5. Slowly position the top strap of the harness over your dog's back and snap the buckles together at the sides (while still standing to the side of your dog).



Coaxing



Fastening



If you have any questions about the informations in this folder, need some assistance in choosing the right harness and getting your dog used to it, or have any further training issues, the staff at QimmiQ Lodge will be happy to help.