

# Understanding Training Equipment Options - Collars, Leashes and Crates - APDT

## Collars & Harnesses

Collars and harnesses serve several purposes: 1) They can provide important information in the form of tags, 2) they can serve as a connection point for a leash, and 3) they can act as a training tool. Most dogs are able to wear some sort of collar, with the exception of dogs with throat disease that might make a harness a safer choice (consult your veterinarian).

### Classic Collars

- Buckle or Quick-connect styles can be flat or rolled (for long-haired dogs.) They typically connect with a buckle or plastic fastener. This is a good everyday collar and a good first choice for training.
- Breakaway or Safety Collars have a release that springs open under pressure. This collar was designed to eliminate choking. The safety release is inactive when a leash is attached.

### Limited Slip/Martingale/Greyhound Collars

- Collars that tighten a small amount when pressure is applied. A mechanical stop on the collar limits the amount of tightening to prevent choking and also prevents the collar from slipping off of the dog's head. A popular choice for greyhounds and other breeds whose head and neck are roughly the same diameter.

### Head Halters

- Similar in appearance to a horse's halter, these collars wrap around the bridge of the dog's nose and back of the head. The leash connects under the jaw and discourages pulling on leash by turning the dog's head to the side. Most commonly used to train a dog to walk nicely on a leash when an owner is having difficulty using a classic collar.

### Slip Collars (also called Choke or Chokers)

- One of the oldest styles of collar often made of chain or nylon. The collar slips over the dog's head and squeezes the neck when pressure is applied. This collar has, to a large extent, been replaced with newer, safer collar designs.

### Prong or Pinch Collars

- These collars have inward-pointing prongs that press into the dog's neck when pressure is applied. This collar was designed to control unruly dogs. Advances in training and equipment now offer other more humane options for feisty dogs.

## **Electronic or E-Collars (also called Stimulation Collars or Shock Collars)**

- Used for underground / electric fence training, barking problems and other types of training. Consists of a collar with a battery-operated receiver that corrects the dog with either a warning noise and / or an electrical shock.

**Note:** Training collars should not be used by novice dog owners or by trainers who are not properly instructed in their use. Use of electronic training collars can result in trauma to your dog and generally are not recommended by positive reinforcement trainers.

## **Harnesses**

- Harnesses wrap around the upper body of the dog and were originally designed to leverage a dog's body weight to pull heavy loads. Usually recommended only for pets with diseases of the throat or neck where a traditional collar would cause further damage to the throat.
- Front-Clip Harnesses are a new form of harness that allows you to clip the leash to a central area on the front of the dog's chest. This diminishes the dog's ability to use his body weight to pull you and these collars can be very effective with strong pullers.

## **Leashes**

- Leashes serve as a form of control for your pet, and come in a variety of materials and lengths. Lighter materials and widths are used for small dogs and heavier materials and widths are used for larger dogs. Most leashes have hardware that clips onto a collar or harness.

### **Standard Leashes**

- Nylon, leather or cotton are common materials for these 4-6 foot leashes. Many trainers recommend this design for everyday use and training since it keeps pets at a manageable distance and is easy to use.

### **Retractable Leashes**

- These consist of a cord that automatically rolls up into a plastic case with a handle. They are useful for teaching your dog to work at a distance from you or for allowing exercise at a distance. It is recommended that these tools be implemented for distance work and exercise AFTER your pet has been trained on a traditional leash. Retractable leashes can be hazardous if used improperly.

## **Crates**

Every puppy or dog needs a place of his own to relax. Crates offer a dedicated space for your pet. They also assist with housetraining and keep your pet safe when he is not being supervised.

Permanent crates can be made of wire or plastic. The wire versions are a bit sturdier and offer more ventilation. Plastic crates offer more privacy and are easier to clean. Aggressive chewers may benefit from a heavy gauge wire crate that will withstand chewing. Soft-side, fabric crates are also available which are good for car trips or outings.

If the pet is a puppy, choose a crate that is the appropriate size for the dog when it reaches adulthood. Dividers designed for the crate can be used to block off the rear of the crate until the pup reaches its full size. In general, the puppy should have just enough room to lie down, turn around and stand up without touching his head on the top of the crate.

There are a variety of decisions to make when purchasing equipment for your pet. Design, material type and sizing are all very important aspects of proper selection. If you have any doubts about the right equipment for your pet, contact a professional trainer who can advise you on safe, effective tools and their use.