

Harnesses Vs Collars by Bach Canine Rehab

(This article provides a wealth of information on why a harness is beneficial to your dog)

Here at Bach Canine Rehab, we regularly recommend that owners walk their dogs on a harness, rather than a collar. There are many reasons why we suggest this – so we thought – time for a blog!

Firstly, a collar round the neck, with a lead attached, will often end up with a dog pulling (we will explain why below....) and therefore putting pressure on his / her neck. There are many sensitive structures in the neck that do not like being squashed by a collar, including the trachea, crucial arteries, the oesophagus, the thyroid gland and lymph nodes, which could even end up being damaged if this situation happened frequently. In the adrenalin fuelled moment of pulling after a squirrel, to greet another dog or to trying to get that bit of chicken bone left on the pavement, your dog will not feel the discomfort of the collar squashing these important structures, but will most likely feel it later. Collars also increase eye pressure, not comfortable for any dog but can be particularly dangerous for dogs with protruding eyes such as pugs or dogs with glaucoma.

Can you, hand on heart, say your dog never pulls on the lead? If no – then maybe a harness would be a good option?

On that subject – collars also can encourage, rather than prevent, pulling. When a dog leans into and pulls on a collar, they tend to make progress, whereas pulling on a harness tends to bring the front legs off the ground, and therefore feels less productive. Pulling into a collar is also very negative for dogs with shoulder or elbow issues, as it exacerbates the load on these joints. Because pulling into a collar disengages the hindlimbs (as all the work is done by the front legs), it is not helpful when trying to rehabilitate hindlimb injuries, as it discourages, rather than encourages, correct hindlimb engagement.

Harnesses with a front and back clip are ideal for using a “balance lead” technique, which can in itself limit or even stop pulling entirely – if you would like to know more about the balance lead technique, do ask us for more info and a demonstration!

On a safety note – collars, if they get caught on something, will strangle a dog. We know of a few dogs who have been badly hurt, and almost killed, because their collar got caught on something on a walk and choked them as they struggled to free themselves. Sounds dramatic, but it happens!

So, please consider whether a collar is the right item for your dog to wear, or whether he / she would actually be more comfortable in a well-fitting harness. Remember, whatever you have on your dog, please ensure you have an ID tag with the right information included, and that your dog is microchipped, as is required by law.

We recommend the Perfect Fit Harness, from Dog Games, who are a great company to deal with and very happy to advise on sizing etc (they also come in a range of fab colours!) and also the Mekuti harness from mekuti.co.uk. Both of these harnesses include front clips, so are great for the balance lead technique.