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## Training Equipment

There are a number of new training aids that can be used to help give your dog direction when walking with you on a leash. They can help change your sled dog into a well-mannered walking companion. Training equipment should only be used during active training sessions since dogs can get caught in the equipment when unsupervised, and they must be accompanied with proper training, or else your dog will become desensitized to them and they will no longer have the desired effect. Here are some of the newest, most popular, and most humane pieces of training equipment currently on the market.

**No-Pull Front Harnesses** -- This is my favorite piece of equipment. It is different from a regular harness because the leash attachment is in the front of the dog, not the back. No-pull front harnesses work on opposition reflex so when the dog pulls it makes him want to stop and turn around. I'd say 90% of my clients who have used them see an immediate improvement, and it is hard to hurt or injure your dog even if misused. The two popular brands you will find at the local pet stores in Bend are the Sensible Harness and the Easy Walk Harness.

**Head Collars/Halters** -- The head collar is based on the same opposition reflex theory as the no pull front harness, except that instead of going over the back and across the chest, it goes on the face. Like the harnesses, the leash attachment is in the front of the dog, in this case, below the chin. This is the best device for the heavy pulling, highly distracted dogs, and fearful, anxious dogs, especially ones with leash aggression issues. Many dogs never get used to having this device on their face, and most dogs need some time to adjust to them so it is important to practice with your dog at home before taking them on a walk in a head collar. Just like you don't put a halter on a horse and immediately go out and ride, you can't do that with your dog either. They can be purchased at most local pet stores and the two popular brands sold are the Gentle Leader and the Halti.

**Martingale Collars** -- These collars are great for training class and training sessions. These collars are designed to put tension on the neck when your dog pulls or gets out of position. They are made of soft nylon so theoretically they can't choke your dog but I have seen many dedicated pullers choke on these collars. I feel they are best used in carefully-monitored training session. For most dogs, it doesn't provide enough information to use when your dog is learning how to walk on a leash, especially in high-distraction areas.

See my other articles at this site for instruction on how to get your dog to walk nicely on a leash. Using those techniques with some of this new equipment can turn your dog into a faithful and cooperative walking partner.

Meredith Gage

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