

Keep a Strong Hold on Your Dog

How to control a hyperactive dog on a leash.

Jon Geller, DVM

Q. We have a 2-year-old male Border Collie mix that is quite large and strong. We also have a 9-year-old female American Eskimo. They're taken for a walk every morning. The Border Collie has had obedience training and excelled in the classes. When they're walking, they're both fine until someone else walks by with their dogs. Then, they both go bonkers: barking, pulling, growling, etc. The Eskimo is easy to handle because she only weighs 25 pounds, but the large male weighs 80 pounds and it gets to be a problem trying to hold them both in. It's almost as if their brains have disengaged.

How do we get them and the situation under control? As soon as the strange dogs have passed they're fine. The male will heel and pay attention to everything you say.

A. Head halters collars, such as the Gentle Leader or Halti, can make an incredible difference in how your dogs behave on a leash. Like a hackamore on a horse, they apply gentle pressure to the bridge of the nose to keep your dog headed in the right direction, and discourage pulling.

Some dogs resent the head halter initially, and will do everything possible to get it off, but if you are patient, they almost all eventually accept it and are like new dogs on leash.

It is especially helpful for people who enjoy taking their dog running or biking on a leash, as I do. I don't have to worry about doing an ungracious header off of my bike if a squirrel suddenly decides to tease my dog, Raindog, with a race to a nearby tree trunk.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

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