



Head Halter Desensitization and Counterconditioning

Progress to the next step only when you have achieved the goal in the current step. You can expect to spend several days completing all the steps if you work at least once a day for 15-20 minutes.

1. Show the dog the halter and then give him a generous handful of tasty treats. Repeat this several times with long pauses in between until he is demonstrating a happy, anticipatory response whenever you make it visible. Even between trials, hang out with him without feeding and with the halter hidden. This will create a contrast that results in the dog thinking, "Where is that halter?! I want to see that halter again! It makes great stuff happen!"
2. Teach the dog to target the head halter by rewarding him every time he bumps it with his nose. A clicker is an invaluable tool here to mark the correct response with precision timing.
3. When the dog is targeting the halter with his nose over and over, wait for two or three bumps before rewarding. While doing so, try to reward the nose bumps that are a little longer and stronger.
4. Hold the halter up with correctly-sized nose loop open and lure the dog's muzzle through with a treat. Do this several times and then hold off on the lure and wait for the dog to put his nose in or near the loop by himself. The goal is better and better approximations of putting his nose all the way in on his own.
5. Next, when he puts his nose in the halter, reward a second or two before rewarding. After several rewards for one second duration, go to two and then three seconds. Praise him while he's in the loop. Gradually increase the time he must remain in it to ten second.
6. Adjust the halter's strap so that it would fit him extremely loosely if it were fastened. Now, while he is waiting in the nose loop for his treat, snap the loose head strap on, treat and then remove the halter. Repeat and add some duration to the loosely-fit halter wearing.
7. Adjust the head strap so that it is closer and closer to the correct fit. Once it is correctly fit, gradually add duration until he is wearing the properly fitted head halter for ten seconds.
8. Take normal walks in the head halter, feeding often and ignoring any minor fussing.

See a video demonstration here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wakterNyUg>