

WHY HARNESSSES ARE BETTER THAN CHOKE AND PRONG COLLARS

Harnesses are the preferred tool for walking and leash management as it provides a non-evasive and fear free learning approach for the dog.

Tools like shock collars, prong collars or choke chains cause a pain or fear response in the dog and are only teaching them to be afraid or to expect punishment rather than learn the behavior we're trying to teach. Harnesses provide a more comfortable support to alleviate choking and help with pulling. Front clipping harnesses are ideal as harnesses that clip on the back can cause the dog to pull more, especially working breed dogs. Front clipping harnesses also allow for more leash control when working on leash walking as it redirects their attention back to the owner.

When choke or prong collars stop a dog from pulling on a leash, they do so because they hurt.

The dog learns that it hurts to pull and so he stops. The reason you sometimes see dogs gasping away on one is that sometimes the collar doesn't hurt enough to dissuade a particular dog from pulling. This is a matter of individual pain thresholds and the technique used. For instance, sometimes owners start out with a regular collar and, when that doesn't work, try a choker and then, when that stops working, go to a prong collar. Ironically, although they are trying to be kind by gradually escalating the painfulness of the device they are using, they might be desensitizing their dog to the pain and so end up using alarming levels of force to get the job done.

A dog taught not to pull with one of these collars must continue to wear it— usually for months or years, and sometimes for life—as pulling on leash is easily relearned once the collar is off. And if their owners alternate back and forth, the dog may learn that it is dangerous to pull when the choke or prong collar is on but safe to pull when it's off and so adjusts his behavior accordingly. This is a function of how animals learn and not an example of dogs being “bad.”

Happily for dogs, the discussion about such collars is an increasingly academic one, as alternative means of training and managing even extra-large dogs are now available. Head-halters and anti-pull harnesses for dogs achieve terrific control mechanically (i.e. by changing leverage points) rather than through the use of pain. **So, given the existence of more humane devices, the role of choke and prong collars is questionable at best.** There are trainers still advocating them and owners still buying them, as they are currently still legal. **But they will likely be made illegal over time.**

