



## EQUIPMENT

The goal of this lesson is to familiarize you with the purpose, description, and proper use of basic Pilot Dogs equipment:

- Martingale collar
- Leash
- Harness
- Gentle Leader

If you have access to this equipment, it may be helpful for you to have it in hand during this lesson to feel the individual parts of the equipment and how they connect as they are described.

### Martingale Collar

#### **Purpose:**

- Allows you to attach your leash to your dog
- Helps to maintain control of your dog
- Holds your dog's identification and microchip tags

#### **Description:**

You can think of the martingale collar in its most basic form as a buckle belt with a chain in the middle. The martingale collar is comprised of two nylon straps, a piece of chain, a quick-release buckle, and three "O" rings.

- The two nylon pieces of the collar connect with a quick-release buckle which allows for you to easily take it on and off of your dog.
- On the opposite side from the buckle are two metal "O" rings that are connected by a short loop of metal chain.

- In the center of the chain is a large “O” ring where the trigger snap of your leash or tie-down is always connected. This is also where your dog's identification tag will be.

### **Use and proper fit:**

When tension is applied to the large “O” ring by the leash or tie-down, the two “O” rings should not touch. If they do touch, the collar may be too loose and therefore, ineffective in controlling your dog. If there is over 1 inch between the “D” rings when tension is applied, the collar may be too tight. In a rested position, the chain will be loose. Your instructor will show you how to ensure proper sizing for your dog. For identification and safety purposes, the collar should remain on the dog.

## **Leash**

### **Purpose:**

- Provides a connection between you and your dog
- Provides a method for control
- Used for relieving your dog

### **Description:**

The leash is made of leather. When fully extended, the leash is 6 feet long with metal snaps at both ends. One end of the leash has a hand loop, and this is the end you will hold while relieving your dog. The handle is elongated to enable you to hold onto that as a shorter version of the leash. The other end of the leash has a larger snap to assist with identification as this will attach to the collar.

### **Proper use:**

The leash can be adjusted into two different lengths—the short leash and long leash. When heeling or working your dog, you will be using a short leash. To make the leash short, attach the snap on the handle end to the base of the larger snap on the other end. Basically, the leash will be folded in half. The larger snap at the end of the leash attaches to the “O” ring of the martingale collar.

A long leash is used for allowing the dog to relieve himself and for some obedience exercises. To make a long leash, disconnect the handle snap from the bottom of the larger snap. Be careful not to inadvertently release the leash from the dog's collar or you will no longer be attached and in control of your Pilot Dog.

## **Harness**

### **Purpose:**

- Equipment by which your dog will guide you
- Identification as a Pilot Dog allowing you access to public places

### **Description:**

The two main parts of the harness are:

- The body piece
- The handle

The body piece consists of a wide chest strap and has two plastic magnetic pieces on each side where the handle attaches. The girth strap is the strap that goes under the belly of the dog.

The handle consists of two rigid long metal shafts, and is attached to two plastic magnetic pieces on each side of the body piece. The handle is attached by sliding it into both plastic pieces. The magnets will help guide it in without much effort. If you have to force it in, the handle needs to be turned right-side up.

Pilot Dogs is currently in the process of creating a new harness, and these harnesses are a work in progress. Feedback about what you like and what you think could be better may be directed to the Director of Training, Jamie Massey.

### **Proper fitting and removal of the harness:**

#### ***Harnessing the dog:***

1. Before placing the harness on your dog, ensure that the quick snap on the girth strap is unhooked.

- Care should be taken not to allow the girth strap to make contact with the dog's head. This is accomplished by folding the girth strap over the back of the harness prior to placing the harness over your dog's head. You can let the magnetic piece on the girth strap snap onto the plastic handle insert slide.
2. With your dog on leash and under control at your left side, the harness is held down at your dog's head level and the command "head in" is given.
  3. The dog will then step into the harness and you will gently place the harness onto the dog's back. The leash will now be under the chest or back strap of your dog.
  4. Locate the leash at the collar and gently pull it out from underneath the harness. Make sure to always keep hold of the leash while harnessing your dog.
  5. Fasten the girth strap underneath the dog using the magnetic clasp, ensuring it is behind both front legs.

***Ensuring the harness is fitted properly:***

To ensure proper fitting of the harness, you should be able to comfortably slide two fingers between your dog's back and the body piece. Any further adjustment can be made using the girth strap by lengthening or shortening the strap. Your instructor will work with you to ensure the best harness handle length and style for you and your dog.

***Removing the harness:***

1. Ensure the dog is under control while removing the harness by maintaining your hold on the leash.
2. Once the girth strap clasp is released, gently fold the girth strap on top of the harness. This ensures that the girth strap is not hitting your dog in the face.
3. Remove the harness by lifting it over the dog's head. Often the dog will step back, taking his own head out of the harness - this is okay for the dog to do.
4. Once the harness has been removed, ensure the harness is stored out of reach of the dog.

**Gentle Leader**

**Purpose:**

- Helps control dog speed
- Helps to maintain control of your dog

### **Description:**

The Gentle Leader has two connected parts: the nose loop, which is thinner and slightly padded on the inside, and the neck strap. The nose loop goes over the nose. The neck strap buckles using a quick-release buckle that clasps high and tight behind the ears. If you hold the two ends of the neck strap (the two ends with the buckles), the Gentle Leader will form a capital letter “T.” The strap that hangs down in the middle forming the base of the “T” is the nose loop. Prior to putting your dog’s nose through the loop, you will have to pull the loop through the metal piece at the top of the “T.” The Gentle Leader will now form a lowercase “t” and the plastic tab on the nose loop will be flush against the metal piece. The plastic tab allows you to adjust the size of the Gentle Leader.

### **Putting on the Gentle Leader:**

When you put the Gentle Leader on your dog, you will always put the nose loop on first, then buckle the neck strap behind the dog’s ears.

1. Slide the nose loop on to your dog’s snout.
2. With one end of the neck strap in each hand, bring the neck strap under the dog’s ears and clasp the two ends of the quick release together, ensuring that the straps are not twisted.

### **Ensuring proper fit of the Gentle Leader:**

- You adjust the neck strap much like a seat belt; you may have to remove the Gentle Leader to adjust this strap. When this strap is properly fitted, you will be able to slip one finger under the strap. This strap should be high on the dog’s neck just behind the base of the skull and ears.
- The nose loop should be as loose as possible without being able to slide off the nose. The nose loop is adjusted with a strong locking plastic tab. This tab slides up and down to change the size of the nose loop. The tab unlocks by flipping the plastic tab up, and locks by pushing the plastic tab down.

- Please note that when the nose loop is properly fitted, your dog will still be able to eat, drink, and pant.
- Ensure that all straps are lying flush with your dog's fur and are not twisted.
- The leash will attach to the small metal ring at the bottom of the nose loop that should now be situated under your dog's chin.

### **Proper use of the Gentle Leader:**

- The Gentle Leader should only be on when you are actively working with your Pilot Dog.
- The Gentle Leader should not be on your dog when he is on tie-down or in a crate.
- In brief, the Gentle Leader works on the same principle as a halter for horses - where the head goes, the body must follow.
- The nose loop of the Gentle Leader puts pressure on the dog's snout and reminds the dog that he is not in control.
- When the leash is attached to the Gentle Leader, think of the tension on the leash as a Yes/No signal to the dog.
  - Tension on the leash tells your dog, "No, I do not like what you are doing."
  - Release of tension on the leash tells your dog, "Yes, I like what you are doing."
- You cannot give standard corrections with the Gentle Leader attached to your dog as you could potentially hurt your dog.
- There are different methods for leash handling based on your individual dog, and your instructor may give you specific guidelines on using the Gentle Leader with your dog.

### **Situations when a Gentle Leader may be Helpful:**

- In a new, stimulating environment where you will need extra control, such as a crowded shopping mall or airport
- If your dog is walking too fast or pulling too hard
- In an area with food on the ground, such as a busy restaurant or food court