

# Eliminating Collar Sensitivity

By Sherry Woodard

*Please use caution at all times when working on behavior modification. It's important to establish a positive relationship with a dog; once you have that, you will be able to make good progress with behavior modification techniques.*

Some dogs are sensitive to their collars being touched and react negatively to being led by the collar. There are times when, for your dog's safety, you may need to lead her by the collar. You can use the following exercise to change a dog's negative association to his collar being touched into a positive association. Follow these steps:

1. Equip yourself with food rewards that you know the dog will work for. Put the rewards in a pouch worn around your waist so that your hands are free.
2. Take her to an area where you can use food rewards without interference from other dogs. If you have to work in a run, remove the other dogs until you've finished.
3. Begin by giving several small rewards to the dog without touching her collar.
4. Then, touch the dog's head with one hand and give her a reward with your other hand.
5. Touch under her chin with one hand and reward with the other hand. Continue touching and rewarding, gradually moving closer to the collar area.
6. When the dog is comfortable with being rubbed under the collar, then start to move the collar while you are rubbing and rewarding.



*Before*



*After*

Limit the sessions to no more than five minutes, then take a break and take the dog for a walk. You should be able to hold the dog's collar with 10 or fewer sessions.

Do not lead the dog by the collar until you have built a relationship and done the steps above to change the association from something undesirable to a wanted reward. Why? There's a difference between being able to hold the dog's collar and being able to lead her by the collar. Some dogs are much more sensitive to the latter, so you should work on simply holding the dog's collar first.

After the work is done, the dog can be led out by the collar for walks, and given a food reward after she has exited the run. Soon, no food reward will be necessary, although a cookie upon returning from a walk is always welcome!

Once progress has been made with one handler, start introducing different handlers in different locations to help the dog generalize about the positive associations.

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