

## Gentle Leader® Behavioral Management System

An enduring image of the modern dog depicts an animal straining at the end of its leash, choking itself, leaping on passers-by, dragging its overmatched owner behind. Owners faced with this problem have sought control through heavy-duty choke collars or prongs that can damage the dog's trachea or they have abandoned the dog to the yard or an animal shelter as unmanageable.

Now many dog owners are turning to halter like devices that teach even the dogs that pull the hardest not to strain at their leashes. Several varieties are now on the market; by far the biggest seller is called the Gentle Leader Head Collar.



### The Developers



The Gentle Leader® Behavioral Management System was developed by Dr. R. K. Anderson, DVM, (Professor Emeritus and Director, Animal Behavior Clinic, College of Veterinary Medicine and Center to Study Human Animal Relationships and Environments, University of Minnesota, and Behavior Consultant to the Animal Humane Society of Golden Valley, MN); and Ruth E. Foster (Past President of the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors).

Dr. Anderson had extensive experience as the Director of the Animal Control program and Animal Shelter in Denver, CO for eight years, and Ruth Foster had extensive experience as the Director of Training for the Twin City Obedience Training Club in Minneapolis and many years as an AKC judge. They came together in the early 1980's with a common interest in developing products for more effective behavior management. Their goal was to design a product that would provide families with fast, humane, "fingertip control."

### About the Gentle Leader

Unlike other collars, this one fastens behind the dog's ears and has a strap that runs around its muzzle. The design takes advantage of the dog's innate behavioral tendencies. It puts pressure on the back of the dog's neck when the dog pulls forward. That pressure calms the dog by touching off a kind of neurochemical response that makes a puppy relax when its mother picks it up by the scruff of the neck.

Also it applies pressure on the dog's nose, the kind of pressure a dominant wolf or dog conveys when it takes a troublesome



youngster's muzzle in its mouth without biting down. This pressure tells the dog to relax and defer to the handler.

By contrast ordinary collars set off dogs' "opposition reflex," which impels them to pull against pressure. The greater the pressure from a neck collar or traditional harness the harder the dog pulls, even if choking. But resisting pressure from the Gentle Leader makes the leash go slack.

Because the dog effectively corrects its own behavior, the head collar gives the owner more control over it while walking.

### THE PROPER FIT - AN ABSOLUTE MUST!

Gentle Leader® fits differently than other collars or halters you may have used before! Without a proper fit, you may experience unnecessary problems - excessive pawing, rubbing and resistance, or chafing of the nose. The Nose Loop needs to be as loose and comfortable as possible, moving freely from just in front of the eyes to the beginning of the fleshy part of the nose - but NOT so loose that it can come off. The proper fit of the Nose Loop is totally dependent on the proper fit of the Neck Strap, which must be high at the very top of the neck (touching the skull) and very snug (only one finger barely squeezes underneath) so that it cannot rotate. (If the Neck Strap rotates, so will the Nose Loop, which may cause chafing of the skin.) When properly fitted and viewed from the side, Gentle Leader® will resemble a "V" for "Victory"!, not an "L" for "Loser."

YES



NO



Originally, Dr. Anderson and Mrs. Foster sold the Gentle Leader through veterinarians and dog trainers. Their seminar had to be taken before you were allowed to sell the Gentle Leader Head Collar. In the mid-1990's, Premier Pet Products took over making and selling the Gentle Leader Head Collar. The Gentle Leader® Head Collar is now sold through retail pet venues and comes with an Instructional DVD, Training Guide with illustrations. One key point that is missing, though, is an explanation of exactly how the Gentle Leader works by a trained veterinarian or dog trainer who had completed Dr. Anderson's seminar. Most of the complaints we here about the Gentle Leader deal with fitting and getting the dog used to the head collar. To get the most out of the Gentle Leader we would highly recommend finding an instructor who has been trained on the proper use of the product as well as teach owners the handling skills necessary to use it safely and effectively.