



HES SCARED DOG BEHAVIOR HANDOUT

We often send dogs to foster that are unsocialized or fearful - dogs that need to learn not to be afraid of people. These dogs are more likely to run away from you if given the opportunity; however all dogs in a new environment should be considered a flight risk. This handout details the proper handling of a scared dog with the ultimate goal being to ease and alleviate the dog's fear of human interaction.

This handout is organized into 2 sections: (1) the first section is a brief summary for those in need of a refresher; and (2) the remainder of the document elaborates on the items in the summary.

Brief Summary

- **Foster's #1 Priority:** Preventing escape. Scared dogs are escape artists and very difficult to capture once loose. A top reason for dogs getting loose is by darting through a door, including car doors. Take extra precautions to seal off any exits/entrances to your home and when transporting your foster dog, especially when a new activity occurs (vacuum, doorbell, thunder, loud music, cars, etc.). Another top reason for dogs getting loose is by getting through, over, or under a fence. Never leave your foster dog unattended outside. If you have a fenced yard, you must supervise your foster dog at all times when in that yard. If you have a doggy door, you must keep it closed or out of reach of your foster dog.
- **Martingale (No Slip) Collar:** The dog must be wearing a snugly-fitted Martingale Collar (you should only be able to fit two fingers under it) at all times. This is a collar with a double loop mechanism that tightens so that it cannot slip over the dog's head. Scared dogs will try to back out of their collar and slip it over their heads, and this collar stops their ability to do that.
- **Harness Lead or Slip Lead:** When we have the stock, we send all shy dogs with a harness lead in addition to the martingale collar. This lead is known as the "no pull, no escape" leash and harness in one. It adjusts to each dog's unique size. If a harness lead is not available we will send you with a slip lead and a harness.
- **Other Special Handling Equipment:** The dog must be on a drag leash (whether outside or inside your home) at all times (leave the leash on the dog and let it drag behind them). This is to ensure that when/if the dog is cornered, scared, or gets loose,

there will always be a safe way to catch the dog without having to touch or encroach on them. If the dog chews the drag leash, use a metal chain leash or cable tieout that they cannot chew through. Dogs can chew through any other material in seconds. We may assign other special handling equipment to your foster dog, like a harness. Do not stop using any special handling equipment that we have assigned to your foster dog unless you have received our Behavior/Foster Team's approval. You may be instructed to clip the harness to the collar with a carabiner.

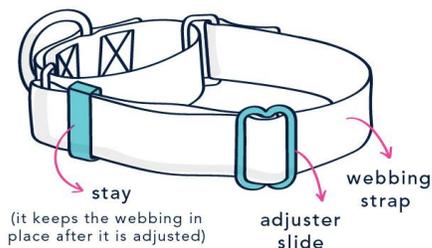
- **Leashed Walks Only:** Outside of the home, the dog must be on a leash that you are holding at ALL times. The dog cannot be off leash, even in a fenced yard. A top reason for dogs getting loose is by pulling the leash from the handler's hand. Make sure you have a very tight grip on your leash when walking the dog. To avoid the dog pulling out of your hand, use a waist leash.
- **Body Language:** Pay attention to the dog's body language.
- **Go Slow:** Be patient. The dog needs to learn to feel safe and trust again. Go slow when meeting the dog. Crouch down. No eye contact. Give the dog space in your home. Expect the dog to be fearful and try to escape when new people come around as well as when new activity occurs.
- **High-value Treats:** Use high-value treats (beef hotdogs, Natural Balance logs, freeze-dried meat - the smellier the better) when interacting with the dog.
- **Transport:** Crate the dog for transport. If not possible, make sure the dog is securely tethered to the car.
- **Lost Dogs:** Immediately notify the Foster team at 423-290-2908 if your foster dog gets loose. Refer to the "HES Lost Dog Protocol" sheet.
- **HES Support:** For general questions or concerns regarding scared dogs, please email us at foster@heschatt.org. If you need a temporary or new long-term foster replacement, please let us know.

MORE ON MARTINGALE COLLARS

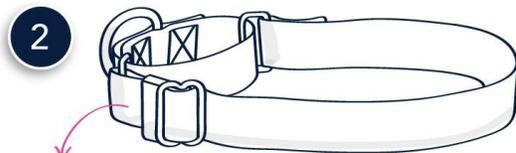
A martingale collar is made with two loops (as shown on the diagram below). The large loop is placed around the dog's neck and adjusted to fit snug and the leash is then clipped to the D ring on the smaller loop.



HOW TO put on a Martingale Collar



1 Feed the webbing through the adjuster slide towards the "stay" to make the collar larger. Move the webbing away from the "stay" to make the collar smaller.



2 Now you can slide the collar over your dog's head

3 Adjust the collar so that it is snug, but you can get 2 fingers under the strap

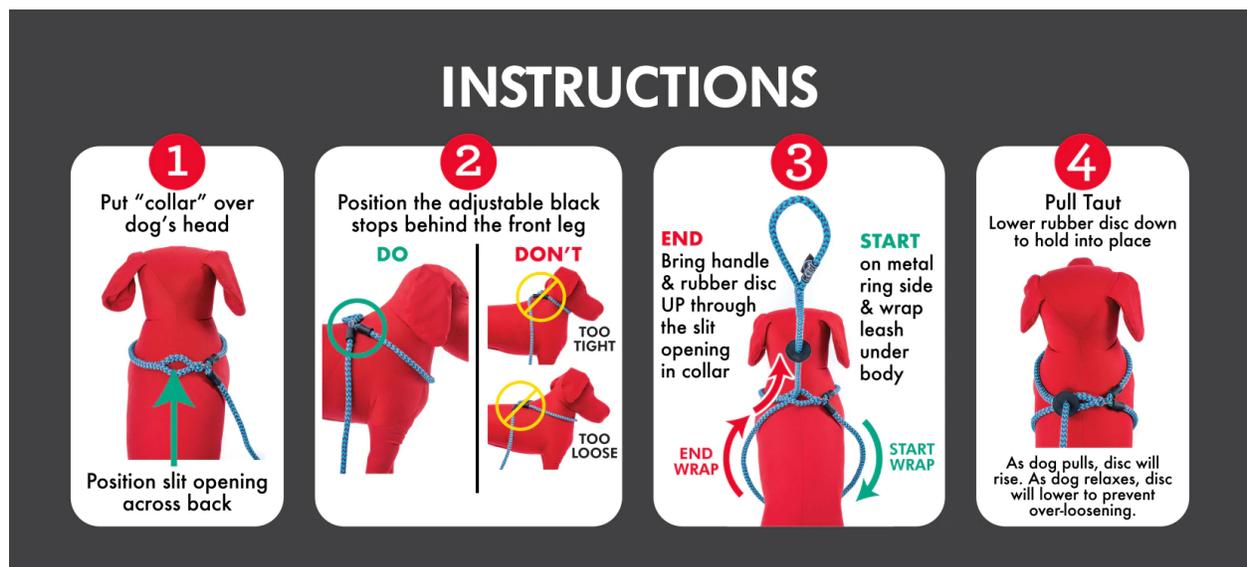


When a dog tries to pull their head out of the collar, the tension on the leash pulls the small loop taut, which makes the large loop smaller and tighter on the neck - preventing escape. Martingale collars are specifically designed to help prevent a dog from slipping out of their collar. They are comfortable until engaged (unlike traditional collars that have to be buckled

uncomfortably tight to prevent escape). When adjusted properly, a martingale collar never chokes, but constricts snugly to prevent escape.

HARNESS LEADS

As mentioned above in the summary, the harness lead is a leash and harness in one that prevents dogs from escaping.



You can visit <https://www.harnesslead.com/pages/troubleshooting> for a video on how to properly fit a harness lead as well.

BODY LANGUAGE

- Dogs cannot talk but their bodies can give their handlers a lot of information. However, there is no absolute guide to dog body language, and what one dog intends with his head position may be completely different from what another dog doing the same thing intends. Here are some generalities regarding scared dog body language:
- Tucked tail - This generally expresses a feeling of fear and/or lack of safety. Be cautious and slow with a dog tucking his/her tail.
- Baring teeth
- Flat ears and wide eye
- **Please review the "Doggie Language" graphic at the back of this handout.**

MEETING A SCARED DOG

- First, the handler should make sure the dog is calm. Dogs pick up on a person's energy and with a nervous dog, the more relaxed and confident the handler is, the more the dog will pick up on it.
- Crouch down so the dog is facing your shoulder.
- Toss high-value treats at the dog; high-value treats can be very helpful in enticing a dog to come to you.
- Talk "sweetly"
- If a dog is hiding in a confined space and shows absolutely no interest in coming to see you, let them be; be patient and give them space.
- Please review the "How Not to Greet a Dog" graphic at the back of this handout.

TRANSPORTING A SCARED DOG

- Crating for transport is the best option; it keeps the dog safe and limits the dog's access. You can try luring the dog with high-value treats into a crate outside of the car and then carefully placing the crate with the dog inside into the car. Then cover the crate with a sheet or blanket to ease fear.
- Please note that the majority of scared dogs are lost by the dog darting out of a door, including car doors.
- If you cannot lure the dog into the crate outside the car, try to lure them into the crate in the car. A shy dog may or may not jump up into your car. Many shelter dogs are not used to riding in cars, and it can be a relatively foreign experience to them. If the dog does not jump into the car, try to lure them with high-value treats. Create a trail with the treats up to the floor of your car and then to the seat.
- Many times a dog will be too scared to eat and won't care about your treats. With the assistance of a staff member, you can test to see if the dog will tolerate being picked up. This starts with slightly lifting up the dog and seeing what their reaction is. You should expect for the dog to whip around. Keep your face and hands away from their mouths as much as possible. If you notice a head whip, growl, baring teeth, or any very polite warning signals, set the dog down. They are telling you they will not be picked up.
- If you can't pick up the dog and they won't be lured into the car, open the door closest to the dog. You may need another person to help you. Go to the opposite side of the car and feed the leash through the car so that if you pull the dog toward you, their only option is to go into the car. Gently apply consistent leash pressure, only to be used with a martingale collar, and gently pull the dog into the car. Have the other person close the door behind the dog, and you can block the dog from getting out on your side. If you can fit a crate in the back of your car, feed the leash through the bars of the cage and pull so the dog goes into the crate.
- If the dog can't be crated: (i) the dog can be transported with just a collar and leash but you must use extreme caution; (ii) tether the dog inside your car (secure the leash to a piece of the car like an overhead handle or the pole at the bottom of the head rests) or use a doggie seatbelt; and (iii) make sure that you can control the dog before driving.
- In cars, scared dogs may pant, whine, bark, move around frantically, or simply lay down and shake. They will often have wide eyes that dart around. This is normal. The world is

a very scary place to them, and if they haven't been in a car often, this could be frightening. If you are a new person to them, imagine how you would feel if you were thrown in a car with a stranger who couldn't tell you where you were going. Remain calm and confident to help them feel more at ease.

- Coming out of the car, the dog will most likely try to bolt away from you. Make sure that the dog is tethered or secure in a crate before you open the door and always have a good hold of their leash.

IN THE HOME

Decompression and Management: In a new environment, like your home, a shy dog is going to be very scared. It is best to give them a space of their own where they can start to feel comfortable.

- Block off a room or a corner to place a crate for the dog. The ideal place would be in a quiet, smaller room with a door (so that door can be closed whenever an exterior door is open). Make sure it is nice and comfy with blankets, water, food, and toys easily accessible. Make sure it is as quiet as possible.
- Block off any doors leading to the outdoors with an xpen. The majority of scared dogs are lost by the dog darting out of a door.
- The first few days should just be about giving the dog a chance to decompress, get their bearings, get used to a routine, and observe you. Try not to "interact" with the dog too much--that means minimal talking, petting, and looking at the dog. Leave them alone in their space, and give them a chance to observe you without that pressure. Let them get used to the new smells and surroundings. Don't try to force them to interact with you. This can also be as easy as letting the dog explore the space on their own. Basically, IGNORE THEM! They are afraid of you at the moment and need some time to adjust. Imagine it this way: you wake up on a spaceship surrounded by aliens (that's what humans are to him). They keep touching you all over and making noises at you. You would not be thinking "are they touching me in a friendly way?" because you would not stop screaming. However, if they were feeding you and not threatening you, and pretty much ignoring you, eventually you might seek to communicate with them.
- If you need to move them or take them out at all, utilize your drag leash by stepping on the end farthest away from the dog, then picking it up to move them.
- Using the drag leash will be important for taking your dog outside to use the bathroom. Establishing a routine for when and where to go to the bathroom will help with reinforcing or learning house training.
- Make sure that doggie doors and windows are securely closed and that there are no other means of escape. Also check any fenced enclosure for holes or weaknesses and eliminate hiding places before taking the dog outside. Be advised that a scared dog may also try to climb your fence.
- Do not take shy dogs to public places until approved by staff. They need more time to adjust before introducing new stimuli. No dog parks or off leash dog areas regardless of if the dog is shy or scared.

Human Interactions:

- Once your foster dog has decompressed, you can start to build a relationship with them. Sit far enough away from them that they aren't running away from you. Sit with your side facing them, not your front. Do not make eye contact. Let them sniff you without acknowledging it. Have some high-value treats with you. Gently toss those treats in the dog's direction. If they are not interested in eating them at that moment, that's okay. Wait for a couple minutes and if they don't eat them, walk away. Repeat this process daily until they feel comfortable eating off the floor. You can slowly try to get closer as they get more comfortable, but TAKE. IT. SLOW!
- Make sure that everyone in the home and visitors: (1) understand that your foster dog is a flight risk and that extreme caution is used when opening doors; and (2) goes very slow with your foster dog and gives your foster dog the time and space necessary to feel secure prior to reaching for him, petting him, or attempting to pick him up.
- If there are multiple people in the household, everyone should be spending time "actively ignoring" the dog.
- **Small Children:** Your foster dog may be frightened or uncomfortable around small children. It is your responsibility to manage the interactions between the dog and any small children. Children should not be allowed to interact with the dog without an adult present. Many of our shy/ scared dogs are not recommended around small children so please follow the rules that the foster staff give you for each specific dog.
- If you have other pets, use them to model behavior. Bring them into the room and facing away from the dog, give them quiet affection.

WALKING

- Walk the dog on a sturdy leash that won't easily slip out of your hands. To avoid the dog pulling out of your hands, use a waist leash. Again, the dog should always be wearing a snugly-fitted martingale collar and harness lead/slip lead/clipped harness. Absolutely NO retractable leashes.
- Before exiting your house, utilize a door routine. You can watch an example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xy4-Zlyf8A> . Generally, dogs are taught to sit and wait while the handler opens the door. When the dog offers eye contact to the handler, they are free to go. This is especially important with scared dogs. Their instinct is to take off at the first chance, so the goal is to instill in them that they can get what they want (in this case, to get out of the house) by making eye contact. If they don't know how to sit, that's okay. You would close the door and wait until you receive some eye contact before proceeding.

- Make sure you're ready to go. Your equipment (collar, any harness, leash. etc.) should be on correctly and securely. Harnesses should be double clipped or attached to the leash by a carabiner so that if the dog shimmies out of their harness, you are still connected to their leash. A harness lead is preferred.
- Walk up to the door, but keep it closed.
- Reward any eye contact from the dog with a "yes" when you receive the eye contact and a treat.
- Open the door slightly. If the dog moves forward to go out the door, close it before they can get out. This is a reset. If they hold their position, you can open the door a little more.
- Open the door in small increments when the dog is waiting and giving you some eye contact. Close the door when they try to bolt through it.
- You want to reward eye contact and reward them holding their position.
- When the door is all the way open or as open as you feel you can get it without them bolting, give a "free" command to let the dog know they are free to move forward and head out for your walk.
- Hold the dog's leash tightly the entire time. Again, these are the dogs most likely to take off if given the chance. When it comes to fight-or-flight, they are definitely going to opt for flight. To avoid the dog pulling out of your hands, use a waist leash.
- Shy dogs may spook at very simple things: cars, sounds, doors slamming, dogs barking, children, etc. This may result in a quick jolt where they try to run away so, again, hold the leash tightly.

Information is compiled and adapted from Austin Pets Alive!

DOGGIE LANGUAGE

starring Boogie the Boston Terrier



ALERT



SUSPICIOUS



ANXIOUS



THREATENED



ANGRY



"PEACE!"
look away/head turn



STRESSED
yawn



STRESSED
nose lick



"PEACE!"
sniff ground



"RESPECT!"
turn & walk away



"NEED SPACE!"
whale eye



STALKING



STRESSED
scratching



STRESS RELEASE
shake off



RELAXED
soft ears, blinky eyes



"RESPECT!"
offer his back



FRIENDLY & POLITE
curved body



FRIENDLY



"PRETTY PLEASE"
round puppy face



"I'M YOUR LOVEBUG"
belly-rub pose



"HELLO I LOVE YOU!"
greeting stretch



"I'M FRIENDLY!"
play bow



"READY!"
prey bow



"YOU WILL FEED ME"



CURIOUS
head tilt



HAPPY
(or hot)



OVERJOYED
wiggly



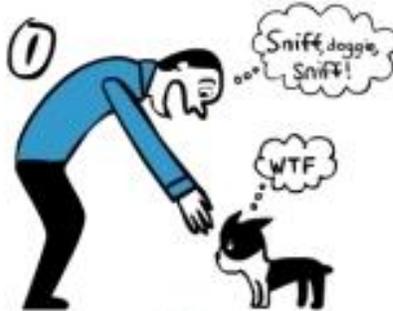
"MMMM..."



"I LOVE YOU,
DON'T STOP"

HOW NOT TO GREET A DOG

Most people do this stuff and it stresses dogs out so they BITE!
I don't care how cute you (or your kid) think Boogie is. Please show him some respect.



DON'T
Lean over the dog & stick your hand in his face



DON'T
Lean over the dog & stick your hand on top of his head



DON'T
Grab or Hug him



DON'T
Stare him in the eye
(This is an adversarial gesture)



DON'T
Squeal or shout in his face



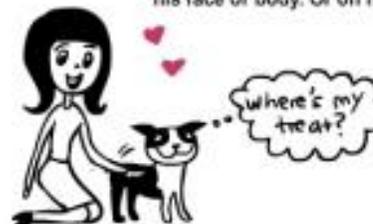
DON'T
Grab his head and kiss it
(This is an invasion of space)

Doing this to a dog who doesn't know you is like a perfect stranger giving you a great big hug and kiss in an elevator. Wouldn't that creep you out? And wouldn't you have the right to defend yourself?

THE CORRECT WAY:



- * No Eye contact
- * Let the dog approach you in his own time
- * Keep either your SIDE or BACK towards the dog (non-threatening posture)



- * Pet or stroke him on the SIDE of his face or body. Or on his back.