

## Training for Shelter Dogs

### “Loose Leash Walking”

One of the more challenging things, to teach shelter dogs, is “loose leash walking”. With multiple dogs needing exercise each day and limited time to spend with each dog, the prospect of training may seem quite difficult.

The dogs may be over aroused because they are excited and anxious to get outside. It can cause people to give up quickly on the notion of teaching loose-leash walking!

That said, you should at least get each shelter dog started on the concept of walking politely, since it is very meaningful for many potential adopters.

#### Key Points:

- Be patient
- Be consistent

By moving forward with a dog that pulls, you are rewarding them for pulling. Even if you are going a short distance, i.e. from the kennel to the door leading outside

#### **Pick a place that has minimal distractions to start, and make sure you have plenty of treats.**

The first thing you want to work on is getting your dog’s attention. You can use the “Watch Me” cue for this. Allow the dog to move to the end of the 6 foot leash and ignore him. Whenever the dog looks back at you, say “Yes!” (or click) excitedly and quickly give him a treat. Then ignore him, and repeat rewarding him for looking at you. Soon you will find the dog is consistently looking back at you and walking towards you. At this point, start moving around – side to side, back and forth, in circles. Again, every time your dog follows you in the direction you move to, say “Yes!” (or click) and reward him. Now you are ready to start teaching them to walk on a loose leash.

### “Loose Leash Walking - Let’s Go”

#### Key Points:

- **Use a six foot nylon lead, flat nylon collar, or martingale collar**
- **Have some off leash playtime first to burn off excess energy**
- **Keep an open line of communication with the dog, don’t leave him guessing. Talk to the dog, encourage him, and offer praise.**

1. Begin walking, encourage the dog to follow you by holding a treat in your hand with your arm straight down by your side
2. Deliver food treat (at knee level) occasionally as the dog walks beside you, using clicker or “yes” verbal cue
3. When the dog pulls ahead, change direction; offer verbal encouragement , when the dog follows, offer “yes” cue and treat
4. Anytime your dog looks up at you while walking, click, or “yes’ cue and reward. (“watch me” exercise, encourages dog to look to you for direction)
5. Once the dog is reliably offering the behaviour, add the verbal cue “Let’s Go”

**Note:** You can further this technique working off -leash, in a fenced in area, or indoor space