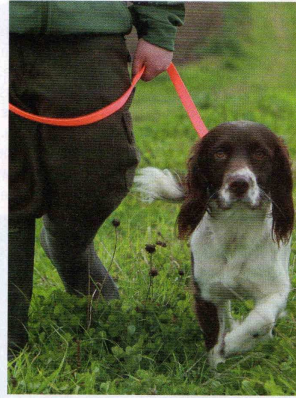




Keeping your dog on a lead

There are no short cuts to stop your dog pulling on its lead, but there is kit that might help, says Lez Graham



training a dog to stop pulling, but I never lose sight of the fact that it is a training aid and not a training solution.

Sometimes our headstrong gundogs get the better of us and before we know it we're dealing with an adult that is pushing boundaries, at home as well as on walks, and this can happen to even the most experienced of dog owners. Time is always against us one way or another. So what aids to training can we employ and how do they work?

When you first start training your puppies to walk to heel it's great – they really want to be with you and please you and in turn, you will likely want to spend time with them. But before you know it, those puppies have hit adolescence and training them can no longer seem that much fun, it's just hard work and what was a joy is now a task. This is about the point some owners will start putting off the lead training, finding a hundred and one excuses not to do it, the one I hear the most is the question that as the young dog doesn't leave their side, why bother putting a lead on it?

Trust me, if you have a puppy or a young adolescent dog, take time out now to train loose lead walking as it will save you such a headache later on.

BUT WHY?

Quite simply we're dealing with a social predator. If your dog was living in the wild, it would only have, on average, a one in 10 chance of catching prey and eating for the day. This means, as far as we're concerned, that we have an incredibly tenacious social predator at the end of our lead – if your dog wants to get ahead then it will repeatedly try to do so and if one in 10 times it is allowed to pull it will continue to try to and, as is usually the case, will try even harder than before.

Another thing to bear in mind is that dogs are 'pressure animals', so if you put pressure on them they will return the pressure. By allowing your dog to 'lean' into its collar, you're encouraging the pulling action on the lead.

QUICK CURES

Let's cut straight to the chase on this one, there are no quick cures for dogs that pull, only aids

to make walking a dog easier. You only have to look in pet shops to see that dogs pulling on the lead is big business for equipment manufacturers. There are prong collars, head collars, check chains, front leg harnesses, back leg harnesses, whistles, beeps, jingles, bungees, the list is endless and exhausting.

LONG TERM SOLUTIONS

The thing that isn't marketed for loose lead walking, however, is 'time', 'consistency', 'repetition' and 'patience', but these really are the only things that will work in the long term.

That's not to say that I won't use aids for

We have an incredibly tenacious social predator at the end of our lead. If it wants to get ahead it will repeatedly try to do so

Without training, you could end up with a dog that is misbehaving, chewing at your heel rather than walking to it



Sometimes our gundogs get the better of us and before we know it we're dealing with an adult that is pushing boundaries



LEZ GRAHAM

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COLLARS AND LEADS

The absolute essential for every dog, is a flat collar and lead, although many gundogs don't wear a collar. If you walk your dog on public land then by law it must wear a collar and tag.

While mine do, I don't particularly like the jangling of dog tags as they must be quite irritating to the dog and make them 'close' their ears to the noise – the last thing we want our gundogs to do. As such, I always recommend Indigo Collar Tags as their tags lie flat on the collar, don't make a noise and don't

Lez recommends Indigo Collar Tags, which lie flat on the dog collar



get caught up in the undergrowth.

The next item on my list would be slip leads, which are so named because they are easy to slip on and off the dog. The slip will always be the first piece of equipment that I reach for, regardless of whether that is for gundog training or behaviour consultations.

The leads I prefer are two meters long and don't stretch. I like them longer as it makes them more versatile and I can train stays, mini recalls and short retrieves on one this length.

Slip leads are a versatile bit of kit, easy to slip on and off and useful for training



Finally, there are many head collars on the market, from ones that control under the chin to those that loop up above the dog's head to figures of eight.

My preference is the figure of eight and specifically the Gencon, which is made from flat webbing and designed not to ride up into the dog's eyes. It is also one of the only dog head collars on the market that will easily fit a muzzle over the top, making it a really valuable piece of behaviour modification kit.

Gencon collars leave room for a muzzle and are used in behaviour modification



Dogs being used for sporting purposes do not require a collar and tag – but will the rest of the time



NEXT MONTH: In part two, Lez will look at techniques for training your gundog to walk to heel without pulling on the lead.

THE COLLAR AND TAG LAW

Known as "the collar and tag law," but actually falling under the 1992 Control of Dogs Order, the rule states that "every dog, while in a highway or a place of public resort, shall wear a collar with the name and address of the owner inscribed on the collar or on a plate or badge attached to it."

There are exceptions to the act, and the one that is relevant to us is the one that refers to: "any dog being used for sporting purposes," however, it is only while the dog is being actively used, the rest of the time a collar and tag should be worn.

The collar and tag law can be enforced with fines of up to £5,000 and anyone found breaking it could well end up with a criminal record for the offence. **SG**