



Standard Operating Procedures



220 Mount Laurel Road
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054
p: 856-234-7626
f: 856-231-8393

Name of Policy:	Muzzling Dogs	Departments:	All patient care departments
Category & No.:	PAT 6.1	Effective by:	4/1/2023
Version No.:	1.0	Revision History:	Original

Purpose: To provide humane handling instructions in order to provide the best outcomes for each patient while ensuring the safety of staff.

Prerequisite(s): Must be an A2, technician, doctor or other hospital personnel approved to handle patients.

Background Information: MLAH recognizes that a patient's whole-health is made up of physical, emotional and neurochemical factors. It is critical for each member of the patient care team to be able to identify and help to ameliorate symptoms of an animal's underlying fear, stress and anxiety in order to provide best outcomes for patients. MLAH is dedicated to humane handling in order to reduce the neurochemical factors that negatively impact the whole-health of each patient.

An appropriately sized basket muzzle should be considered an essential tool in the handling and management of fearful and anxious patients within the hospital and should be used immediately when appropriate. When used proactively, a basket muzzle helps prevent an animal from learning that biting prevents undesirable handling and interactions—ensuring the animal does not bring that learning into future interactions that they consider undesirable. In conjunction with the use of other behavior-management techniques, the use of an appropriately sized basket muzzle may limit the need for excessive handling and restraint while providing an additional level of safety to team members who need to examine or perform treatments on an anxious or fearful patient.

A muzzle does not prevent an anxious or fearful dog from learning that handling and interactions with strangers is scary and/or dangerous, therefore **the use of a muzzle does not negate the need for environmental and chemical anxiolytic modification techniques for our anxious and fearful patients.** Use of a muzzle on an anxious or fearful animal should not be considered appropriate mitigation of their fear, stress and anxiety. Therefore, muzzles should always be used in conjunction with counter-conditioning (continuous feeding) or chemical restraint to prevent continued negative learning associated with vet care by fearful and anxious patients. Enforcing this protocol supports the hospital goal of continuously striving to provide the most humane patient care while keeping staff members safe.

Procedure:

Determine whether the animal requires a muzzle.

- Patient has a history of requiring a muzzle for handling.
- Patient has been taught to wear a muzzle to make them more comfortable with handling.

- Patient is showing significant signs of fear or pain (i.e., cowering, vocalizing, shaking, whale eyeing, out of context panting, pinned ears, inability to eat, tense muscles, lip licking while avoiding gaze, piloerection, hiding/retreating)
- Patient has air snapped or attempted to bite previously.

Placing muzzle on patient

- Determine the correct size for the patient.
- Ensure you are familiar and comfortable with how the muzzle is secured— Practice a few times away from patient if necessary.
- If the patient is not exhibiting clear signs of nausea, put lickable treat inside of muzzle (cheese, baby food, peanut butter, etc). Very small amounts should be appropriate even if the patient is going to be sedated.
- Have another staff member appropriately leash patient or appropriately restrain patient with a towel.
- Hold muzzle by the side where straps meet the basket, ensuring the straps are manageable and are not tangled.
- Stand behind the patient and in a swift and confident movement, place muzzle over dog's nose and strap around ears.
- If the patient has no medical contraindication and is willing to eat, continue feeding through muzzle for the duration of muzzle wearing. *if patient is unwilling to eat, chemical anxiolytic should be utilized if not medically contraindicated

Removing muzzle

- Determine with doctor whether sedation is appropriate for removing muzzle. If appropriate, administer sedation and follow protocol once medication has taken effect.
- Have another staff member appropriately leash or restrain the patient with a towel.
- Approach patient from behind and quickly and confidently unstrap the muzzle.
- Pull the muzzle to the side of the patient's face, ensuring you are not pulling the muzzle down and placing any part of your body directly in front of the patient.