

WHY DOES MY DOG PULL?

The simple answer is that decisions are made from the front of the pack. This is where leaders position themselves to conduct the hunt (walk to us) and protect the pack.

In the canine world, wolves, dogs and other canines do not think in terms of walks. In fact, instinctively canines conserve energy for the hunt. There must be a purpose to walking like hunting, marking or patrolling their territory, going for water, migrating to a new territory, etc.

Essentially, in our world, when our dogs hit the air, they think they are hunting. Leading the hunt is one of the main areas in which leadership is established and maintained. Your dog tries to get ahead of you to do its job as leader. This is why it tries to run out the door first or back inside first when you return from the hunt. (The leader's job is to go inside first to check for dangers.)

During the hunt the leader makes all the decisions. Pulling on the leash is a strong indicator of this. As leader, your dog is motivated to check out something like a scent, another person, another dog, etc. Or, your dog may want to change where or what it is hunting and pulls you in that direction.

Your becoming the leader is the remedy for pulling because your dog will be motivated to stay by your side because it will feel safe there. That is, your dog will see you as a competent leader who conducts the hunt and protects the pack during the hunt. In short, your dog will trust your decision-making.

It would take a long article to cover all aspects of leading the hunt. There are great resources to help you become a leader. Please check out the books and video (including links) noted. Of course, I would be happy to talk with you at no cost or obligation.

Meanwhile, check out harnesses that will significantly help reduce your dog's pulling. The customary flat collar gives your dog the ability to pull with full force. This can cause your dog to hurt its neck muscles or even its trachea. Generally, avoid any collar or harness that is based on using pain to train.

Front leading harnesses are my favorite alternative to a collar. With a front leading harness, you hook your dog's lead to a ring that is in front of your dog's chest. Thus, your dog's pulling power is significantly reduced because your dog deflects itself toward the side you are on when it pulls.

Front leading harnesses are available in pet supply stores or online. My favorite is the Walk Your Dog with Love harness because it is one of the easiest to adjust and it is quite easy to put on and take off.

If you still favor a harness where the leash is hooked to a ring on the dogs back, keep in mind that many of these harnesses give your dog full pulling power. There are exceptions to this. Plus, because of its size, a very small dog may be manageable regardless of the harness used. Just make sure the dog cannot get out of the harness. Very small dogs tend to be Houdini's!

I always enjoy talking with dog lovers! I welcome calls daily from 9 AM to 9 PM at no cost or obligation. I look forward to talking with you! Best wishes, Phil 860-604-0996