

BACK TO BASICS

Back to Basics – What will we be covering?

- **Review of body language**
 - Review of different body language you may see when working with dogs
 - Review of FAS and Canine Ladder of Aggression
 - Why it is important to read and listen to body language
- **HSHV's training and animal handling philosophy**
 - The importance of having fear free interactions with our animals
 - Why HSHV utilizes positive reinforcement training
- **What walking tools are used at HSHV**
 - Review of the different tools used at HSHV, including some common kennel signs
 - Why different tools are assigned to different dogs
 - How to appropriately use all of the tools we have at our disposal

Dogs use their whole body to communicate

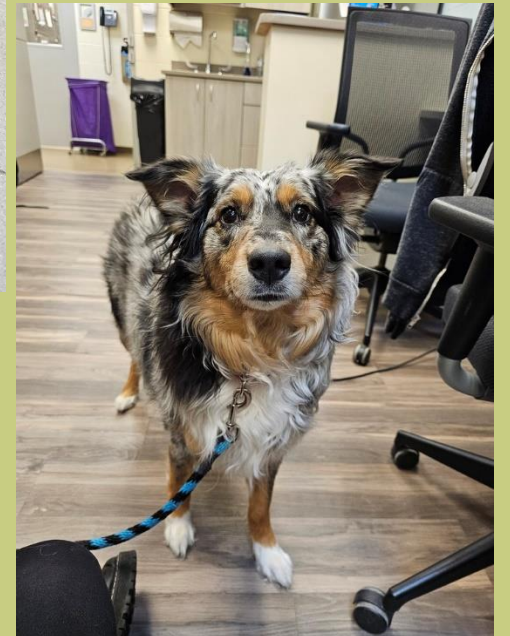
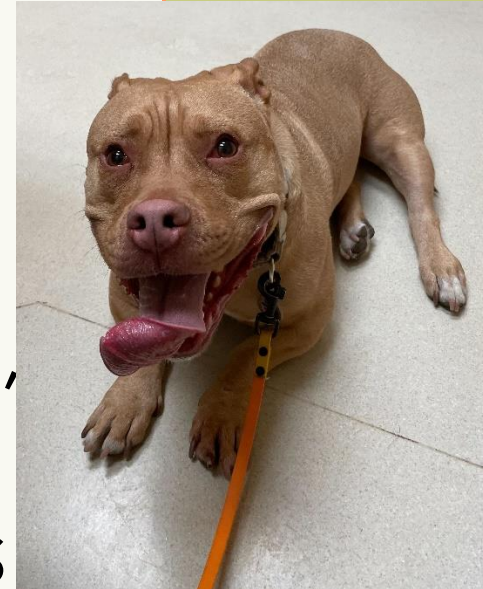
Behavior is communication

- Dogs are highly social species and have adapted to communicate to each other with their body language
- Because they are so social, their behavior is heavily ritualized
- “Ritualized aggression” allows dogs to manage conflict while minimizing risk of injury

Dogs use their whole body to communicate

Look at that face

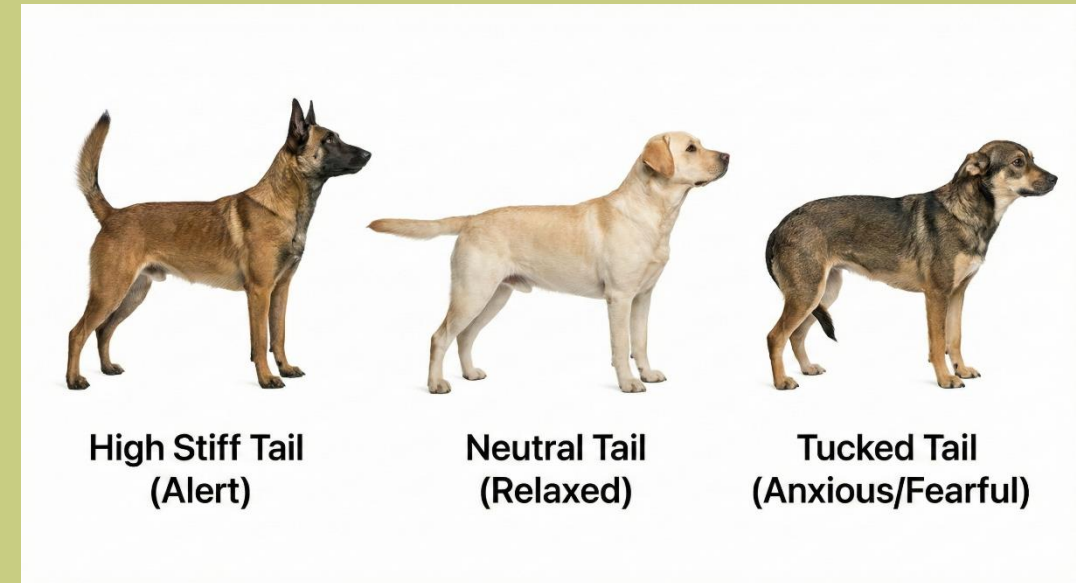
- Eyes: are they closed, relaxed or wide?
- Ears: Are they forward, high, pinned?
- Mouth: Are they panting? Is their mouth tight or relaxed?



Dogs use their whole body to communicate

All about the tail

- What is the relative height of their tail?
- Is the tail moving at all?
- Are the tail wags stiff or relaxed?
- Remember – Tail wags do not always mean a dog is happy!



Dogs use their whole body to communicate

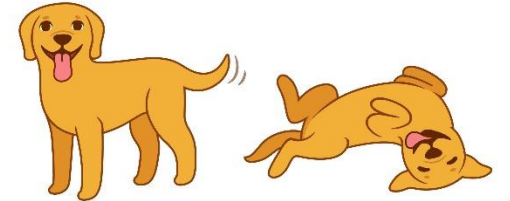
Watch their posture

- Is the dog leaning in a certain direction?
- Are they tense or relaxed?
- Is their body crouched, neutral, upright?
- How are their paws positioned?

Understanding dog body language

Happy

Relaxed posture, mouth open, wagging tail.
Dog is friendly and invites interactions.



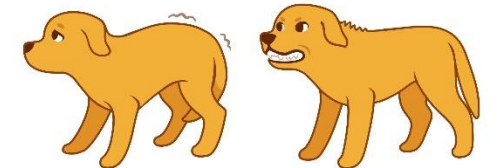
Worried

Dog avoids eye contact, body tense, tail low.
Licks its lips or yawns.
Lifting front paw in hopes of disengaging.



Very stressed

Very tense, cowering and trembling or growls and snarls, baring its teeth.
It is threatened and will bite if it must!



Dogs use their whole body to communicate

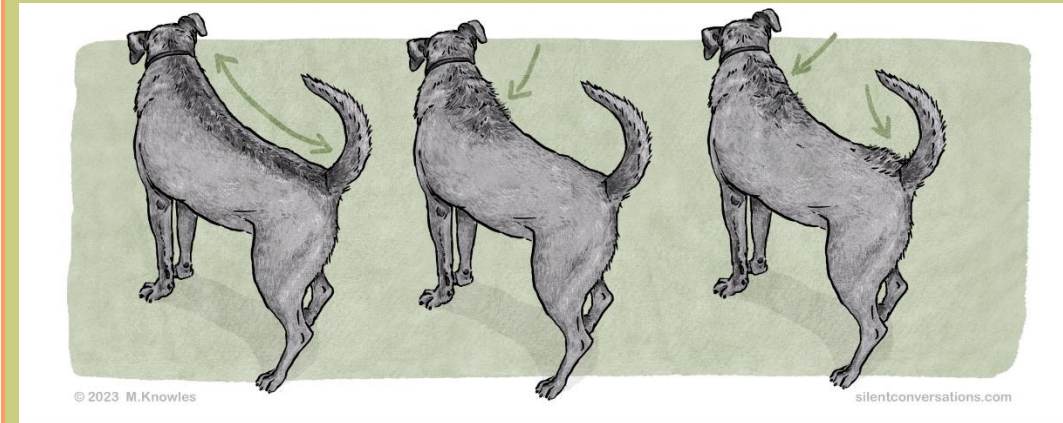
Vocalizations

- Dogs vocalize in many ways, commonly barking, growling or whining
- Like a tail wag, barking can mean lots of different things – listen to the pitch of the bark as well as the frequency
- Like with everything, consider the whole picture and the rest of the body language

Dogs use their whole body to communicate

Raised Hackles – is it aggression?

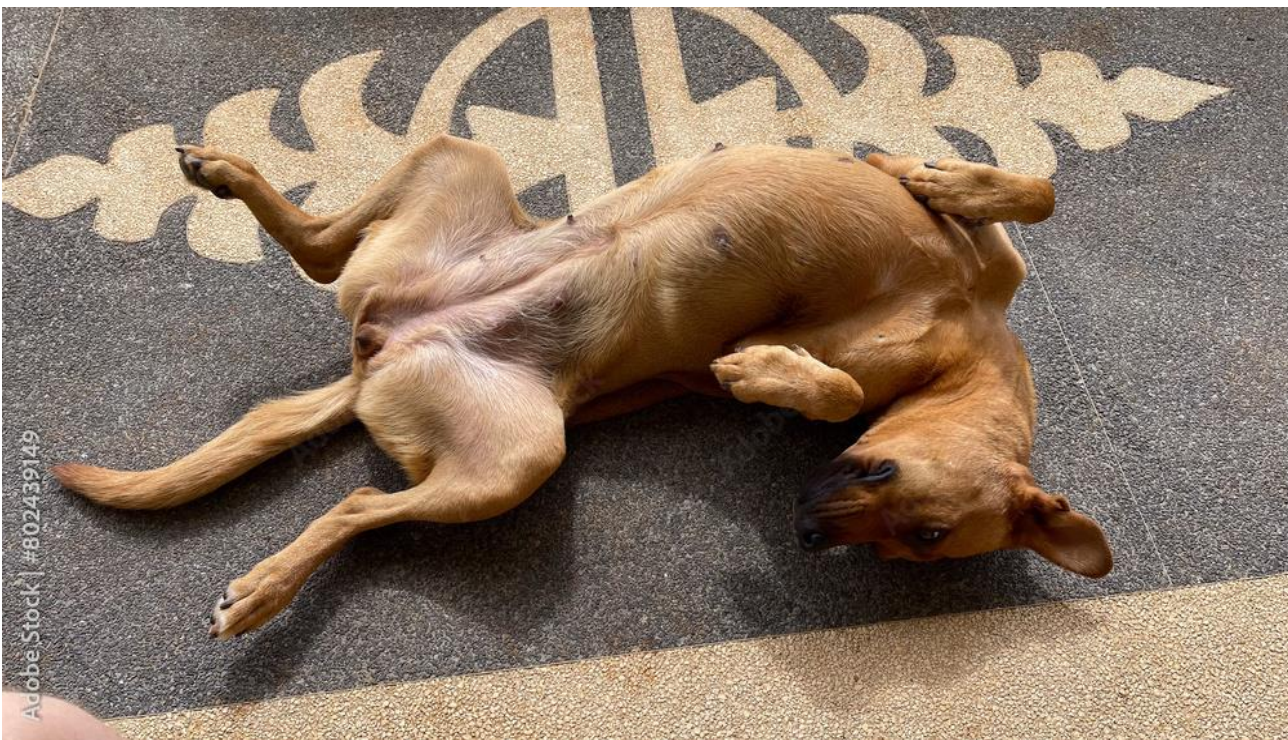
- Raised hackles are an indicator of arousal and do not inherently mean that aggression will follow
- Always look at the full picture! Check the rest of the body language
- Heightened arousal indicates stress, but stress is not always negative









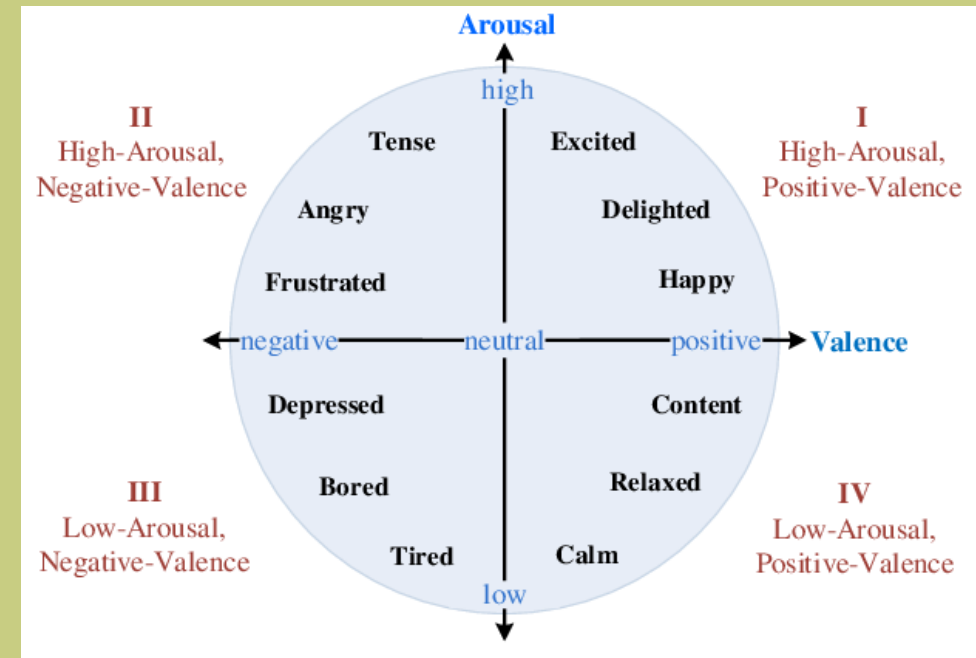




A note about arousal

What is “Arousal”?

- Arousal refers to the intensity of the animal's emotional state
- Most often discussed in the context of heightened arousal
- Can occur with both positive and negative emotions



A note about arousal

How to identify Arousal

- Often will see “hackles” or piloerection
- Dilated pupils
- Increased respiratory rate or panting
- Physical agitation – jumping, pacing, humping, mouthing, “chompy” treat taking

HYPERAROUSAL



HYPERACTIVE



DESTRUCTIVE



PANTING



FACIAL GRIMACE



UNABLE TO FOCUS



SNATCHING TREATS



MOUNTING



LIPSTICK SHOWING



CONSTANTLY JUMPING
AND MOUTHING



EXCESSIVE FRIENDLINESS



What is Aggression?

Motivations

- Distance increasing, often based in fear or insecurity around resources
- Distance decreasing, most often seen in predatory interactions

THE SPECTRUM OF FEAR, ANXIETY & STRESS

RED: SEVERE SIGNS - FIGHT/AGGRESSION (FAS 5)

- Offensive Aggression - lunging forward, ears forward, tail up, hair may be up on the shoulders, rump, and tail, showing only the front teeth, lip pucker - lips pulled forward, tongue tight and thin, pupils possibly dilated or constricted.
- Defensive Aggression - hair may be up on the back and rump, dilated pupils, direct eye contact, showing all teeth including molars, body crouched and retreating, tail tucked, ears back.



RED: SEVERE SIGNS - FLIGHT/FREEZE/FRET (FAS 4)

- Flight - ears back, tail tucked, actively trying to escape - slinking away or running, mouth closed or excessive panting - tongue tight instead of loose out of mouth, showing whites of eyes, brow furrowed, pupils dilated.
- Freeze/Fret - tonic immobility, pupils dilated, increased respiratory rate, trembling, tense closed mouth, ears back, tail tucked, body hunched.



YELLOW: MODERATE SIGNS (FAS 3)

- Similar to FAS 2 but turning head away, may refuse treats for brief moments or take treats roughly, may be hesitant to interact but not completely avoiding interaction.



YELLOW: MODERATE SIGNS (FAS 2)

- Ears slightly back or to the side, tail down but not necessarily completely tucked, furrowed brow, slow movements or unable to settle, fidgeting, attention seeking to owner, panting with a tighter mouth, moderate pupil dilation.



GREEN: MILD/SUBTLE SIGNS (FAS 1)

- Tail up higher, looking directly, mouth closed, eyes more intense, more pupil dilation, brow tense, hair may be just slightly up on the back and tail, may be expectant and excited or highly aroused.



GREEN: ALERT/EXCITED/ANXIOUS? (FAS 0-1)

- Looking directly but not intensely, tail up slightly, mouth open slightly but lips loose, ears perked forward, slight pupil dilation.

“LADDER OF AGGRESSION”

How a dog reacts to stress or threat

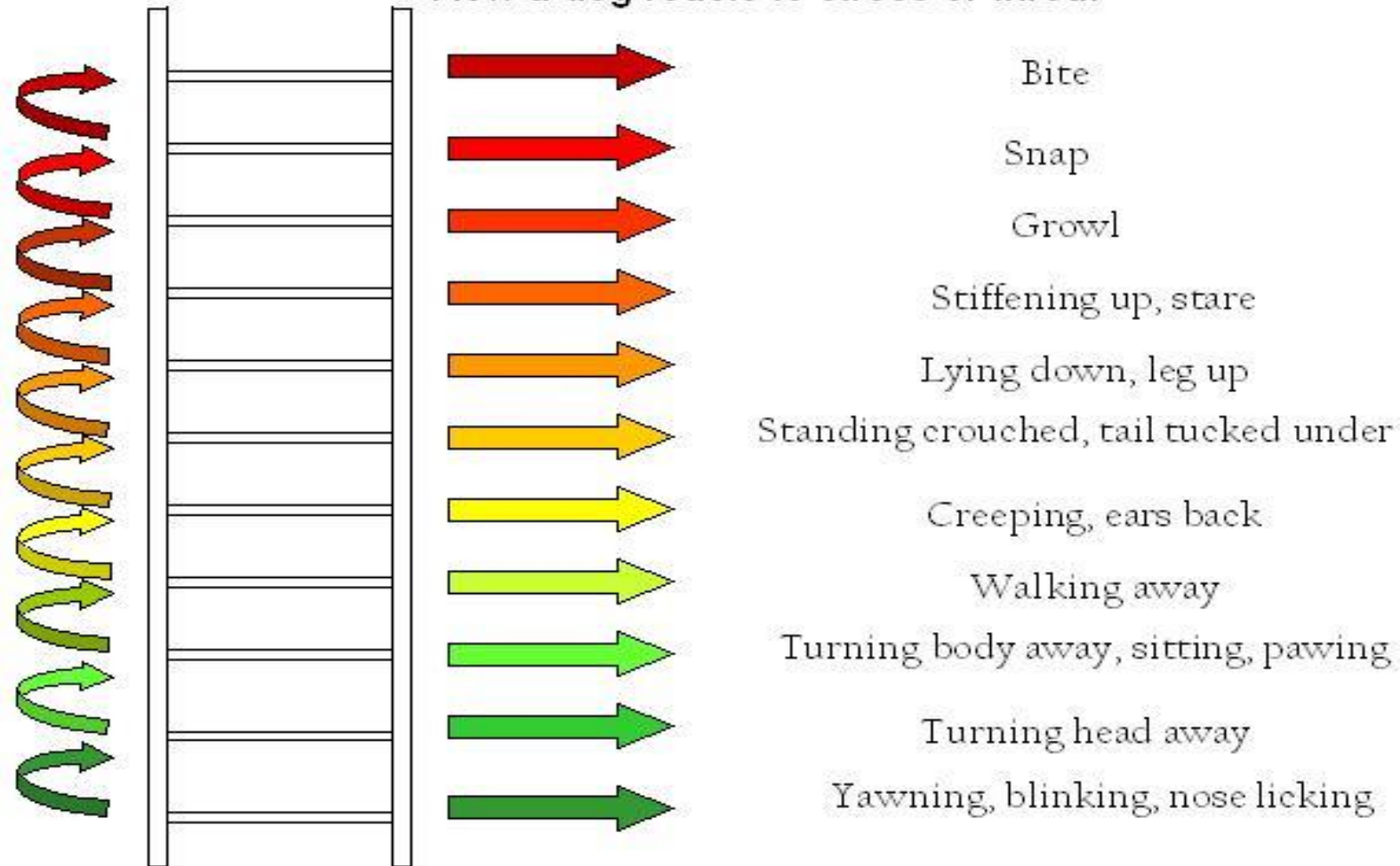


Fig. 2.6 BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Behavioural Medicine chapter 2 by Kendal Shepherd.

Fear Free Handling

What is fear free handling?

- Fear free handling emphasizes reducing stress through adjustments to the environment, thoughtful handling, and positive reinforcement.

Why do we use it?

- Modern, ethical and science-based
- Alternative options (forced interactions) are likely to result in an increase in FAS and increase risk of bites.

Why are fear free interactions important for shelter dogs?

- Dogs in the shelter have severely reduced freedom and choice due to the inherent nature of the kennel environment
- Allowing choice in our interactions with the dogs helps to reduce stress and teaches them that people will listen when they are asking for space

Interested in Fear Free Certification?

All you have to do is complete a form verifying your volunteer status here at HSHV. First, click on the verification form ([which is available here](#)). Next, go to the [registration page](#) on the website and then upload your completed document. Once it has been approved by the program, you will have access to the training modules and can get started.

If you are interested in learning more but not quite ready to complete the registration process, they have a great [Introduction Video](#) that you may want to check out! Fear Free also has a separate program called [Fear Free Happy Homes](#), which is available to the public.

If you do choose to work on these modules and complete the course, you will find your nametag sticker at the VIC sign in computer, both here and at TLC. To log your volunteer hours, you can use the "Time Sheet" tab in VIC and record your hours under the "Fear Free Training" assignment.



Positive Reinforcement Training

What is R+?

- The addition of a reinforcer delivered contingent on a behavior that increases the likelihood of that behavior occurring in the future.
- Providing a primary reinforcer, such as food, when a dog does something that we like or want them to continue doing
- Reinforcers can also include toys, play or praise

Positive Reinforcement Training

Why do we use it?

- Broadly considered the most ethical way to teach an animal
- Creates clear communication to the animal to tell them what behaviors we like to see, often through a mark and reward system
- Increases an animal's behavioral repertoire so they can communicate with us in ways that are safe and functional
- Positive reinforcement enables us to build a healthy relationship and gain trust from the dogs we're working with

Positive Reinforcement Training

What are aversives?

- An aversive is any stimulus that a dog finds unpleasant or uncomfortable
- In training, this can range from a loud noise, to spray bottles, to tools like a shock or prong collar
- The intention is to teach the dog that a behavior they are doing is unwanted and to reduce the likelihood of the dog doing that behavior
- The learner decides what is aversive

Positive Reinforcement Training

Why don't we use aversives?

- Aversive training can create conflict in the relationship we have with an animal
- Dogs can learn through the application of an aversive stimulus, but there are ethical concerns about intentional discomfort caused in training
- Applying an aversive does not address the underlying motivation of the behavior
- Risks include suppressing warning signs for aggressive behaviors, increasing chance “unpredictable” aggression

Positive Reinforcement Training

For positive reinforcement training, we use a mark and reward system



Always mark first and then reward for a desired behavior



Common markers:

Clicker

Verbal marker:

- Use a high pitched and friendly "Yes!" or "Yip!"



Common rewards:

High value food (always the default and to be used first)

Toy

Praise

Walking tools at HSHV

Martingale Collars

Lick Mats

Fabric Leash

Metal Leash

**No-Pull Harnesses
(Easy Walk and
Freedom No-pull)**

Headcollars

Walking Tools at HSHV

Martingale Collars

- Used primarily to reduce possibility of escape/backing out of a collar
- Compatible with leash wrap



Walking Tools at HSHV

Fabric Leash

- Standard leash used to walk most dogs – typically 6ft in length, but can vary
- Can be used to leash wrap dogs
- Safely held with “microphone hold” – avoid wrapping around wrist



Walking Tools at HSHV

No-Pull Harnesses

- Primarily use Easy Walk No-pull harness
- Some dogs who may “live” in their harness might wear a Freedom No-pull. Designed to be softer on skin and fur, especially around armpits
- No pull harnesses work by clipping to the front, creating more leverage for the handler and making pulling less functional
- Always clip the harness to the collar!



Walking Tools at HSHV

Lick Mats

- Used for dogs who may be extra excitable during leashing
- Alternatives include putting food directly on wall or using a treat scatter on the ground
- Should be avoided with dogs who have a history of resource guarding (noted on kennel signs)



Walking Tools at HSHV

Metal Leash

- Primarily used with dogs who might leash bite out of excitement or arousal
- Occasionally also used with dogs who have a history of chewing through their leash
- Goal is to eventually transition off of the metal leash through behavior modification



Walking Tools at HSHV

Headcollars

- Rarely used at HSHV
- Dogs will typically be “Staff Only”
- Requires extensive desensitization to be used appropriately and ethically
- Typically used with large, extremely strong dogs





Thank you for helping
our dogs!

