

Why We Sometimes Muzzle?

At Franktown Animal Clinic, our priority is ensuring the safety and comfort of both your pet and our veterinary team during examinations and procedures. Muzzling is a tool we may use to protect everyone involved when an animal is showing signs of stress, fear, or aggression. Below, we explain why muzzling is sometimes necessary and how we assess an animal's body language to determine when to use a muzzle.

Why Do We Use Muzzles?

- **Safety First:** Even the most well-behaved pets may react unpredictably when they are painful or scared.
- **Reducing Stress for Your Pet:** Muzzling can prevent escalation by allowing us to efficiently perform necessary exams or treatments without additional restraint.
- **Protecting Our Team and You:** A bite can result in serious injury to staff, pet owners, and even the pet itself if they react suddenly.
- **Quick and Efficient Care:** When an animal is muzzled appropriately, procedures can often be completed more quickly, minimizing stress for your pet.

What We Look for in Body Language Before deciding to use a muzzle, we carefully observe an animal's body language to assess their level of stress or discomfort. Some key indicators include:

Dogs:

- **Ears pinned back**
- **Lip licking, yawning, or excessive panting (when not hot)**
- **Cowering or trying to escape**
- **Growling or showing teeth**
- **Raised hackles (fur along the back standing up)**
- **Whale eye (whites of the eyes showing more than normal)**
- **Rigid or stiff body posture**
- **Snapping or lunging**

Cats:

- **Ears flattened or rotated backward**
- **Tail flicking or tucked close to the body**
- **Hissing, growling, or vocalizing more than usual**
- **Dilated pupils**
- **Crouching or trying to hide**
- **Swatting or attempting to bite**
- **Puffed-up fur along the body or tail**

Our Approach to Muzzling

- **Assessing Behavior First:** We always try to read your pet's body language and use gentle handling techniques before considering a muzzle.
- **Using the Right Type of Muzzle:** We use soft, comfortable muzzles designed for short-term use to ensure your pet can breathe properly.
- **Minimizing Fear:** We work calmly and efficiently to minimize the time your pet is muzzled, ensuring they are as comfortable as possible.

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- **Communicating with You:** If your pet requires a muzzle, we will explain why and answer any questions you may have.

When a Muzzle is Not Enough or Not Necessary In some cases, a muzzle alone may not be sufficient to keep a pet calm and safe during an examination or procedure. In these situations, we may recommend sedation instead of—or in addition to—using a muzzle.

Sedation Options We Use

- **Gabapentin:** Commonly used for both dogs and cats, Gabapentin helps reduce anxiety and reactivity while promoting relaxation.
- **Trazodone:** Typically used for dogs, Trazodone is an anti-anxiety medication that helps pets remain calm during stressful situations.

These medications are often given before the appointment to help make the visit more manageable for both your pet and our veterinary team. If your pet has a history of extreme anxiety or aggression, please discuss pre-visit sedation options with us.

Muzzling is never done as a punishment—it is a precaution to keep everyone safe while providing necessary medical care. If you have any concerns about muzzling or how your pet may react during a visit, please let us know in advance so we can discuss the best approach for your pet's needs.

For any questions or to schedule an appointment, please contact us at:

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