**WAYNE ANIMAL HOSPITAL**

**LEASH AND COLLAR RECOMMENDATIONS**

**LEASHES:**

We recommend a thick nylon or leather six foot leash instead of a retractable leash, especially when you are first training a dog to walk with you. You have so much more control of a dog with a regular leash, and most training classes require you use this regular six foot leash in class, so why would you want to stray from this sage advice?

Retractable leashes can be very problematic for many different reasons ranging from safety concerns to creating training issues.

**Problem 1: Teaches dogs to pull on leash**. There has to be constant pressure on a retractable leash, unless it’s locked, so dogs quickly learn that pressure on the leash means nothing. You have to pull even harder than you would with a regular lead just to get your dog’s attention.

**Problem 2: No real control**. Your dog is not truly ‘on leash’ with a retractable leash. It’s more like a 20-foot force-field that keeps them in. But the leash will do very little to direct them, one way or another, if you are that far back. It puts the handler in a position of constantly being reactive instead of proactive on the walk. The dog is given nearly unlimited freedom – until he annoys or worries the owner - then the owner reacts to the dog by taking space back from him (or trying to).  If the dog is regularly allowed to take all the initiative on the walk and never has to earn the freedom of space to explore, he’ll never appreciate it.  He’ll see it as a right not a privilege. A dog that thinks that he makes decisions AND that he is entitled to unlimited space and freedom is a dog that will never recognize his owner as a leader. He is therefore much more likely to challenge the owner for freedom (and other resources) and to resent the owner when he doesn’t get it.

**Problem 3: Offends or scares other people and dogs**. People can be scared of dogs, even tiny Chihuahuas, and without being able to truly control your dog; it may be confronting people who do not want to interact with it. These people have no means of getting away from the situation since retractable leashes allow dogs to move in any direction until their owner catches up to them.

**Problem 4: Wicked rope burns**. This can happen to you or your dog if it gets wrapped up in the line.

**Problem 5: Dogs have way too much momentum**. Dogs can pull hard enough on a little short leash. With a retractable leash, they can build up quite a head of steam!

**Pros (and note how there is only one).** Retractable leashes are great if you've got your dog in a big open field and you're letting your dog be a dog: sniffing, galloping across the field, pouncing, playing. And that's about the only place and time that retractable leashes are good.

\*\*\*Use a back-attachment harness when using retractable leads, never a prong collar, head collar, flat collar, or front-attachment harness, because of the damage they can inflict on your pet.

**COLLARS:**

\*\*\*All animals should have a form of identification on them at all times. A regular buckle collar or martingale collar with owner contact information is extremely important. Microchips are highly recommended for all dogs and cats. There are many times when your animal is not wearing a collar or can lose tags. A microchip is a form of identification that can never be lost.

**Harness:**

The harness can be a great tool if you want your dog to pull you. For example, if you want your dog to pull you around while you ride your bike or use rollerblades.

This is also a safe option for dogs with pushed-in faces that restrict breathing, such as pugs, dogs with trachea or throat problems, such as Pomeranians, and dogs with elongated, overly slender necks, such as Greyhounds and Dachshunds, may have to avoid certain collars, such as slip collars.

**Slip collar (choke):**

For dogs with issues on the walk, this can be a great tool for correcting misbehaviors. If your dog is easily distracted by squirrels, other dogs, or just a strong gust of wind, the collar allows for quick corrections to get your dog back on track.

Give a quick, firm pull sideways on the leash. If you pull straight back, your dog will pull against you. Instead, by giving a quick tug to the side, you knock him off balance and get his attention. Always keep your dog's safety in mind when giving corrections! If you are unfamiliar how to use the tool, talk to a local professional. Bulldogs, Boston Terriers, and other brachycephalic breeds should not wear these collars. Chain versions can become problematic in emergency situations. DO NOT LEAVE COLLAR ON DOG ALL THE TIME.

**Halti, Gentle Leader, and no pull harness:**

For dogs that have problems with walking, these are always a good place to start. These products along with proper instruction can be very valuable in correcting pulling.

**Prong collars:**

For dogs who are extreme pullers or who can easily over power their owner, a prong collar could be useful. **THESE COLLARS ARE NEVER TO BE LEFT OF WHEN NOT IN USE.** They should be properly fitted and never be too tight or too loose.