

### **Reasons to handle/restrain an animal**

Physical control or restraint may be essential in some situations, for example:

- To prevent worsening of an incident, especially if human life or safety is involved
- To enable an entrapped animal to be released
- To remove the animal from a place of danger to a place of safety
- To prevent injury to emergency responders
- When administering first aid to the animal
- Examination
- Collection of samples
- Drug administration
- Therapy, or manipulation

The method used should minimise:

- Fear
- Pain
- Stress and suffering for the animal
- Should protect both the animal and handler from harm

Every effort should be made to ensure adequate and ongoing training in animal handling and behaviour by all parties involved, so that distress and physical restraint are minimised. Where appropriate, the animal should be acclimated to the restraint method/device before use to mitigate fear and distress. In some situations, chemical restraint may be the preferred method. Whenever possible, restraint should be planned and communicated prior to its application.

### **Why it is important to correctly identify animals being handled**

- Identification of gender
- Identification of breed / species
- Identification of any allergies / dietary requirements
- It is useful to know the weight of the animal so that the correct food, water, medication amount can be given
- To avoid behavioural issues that can cause harm to the handler
- To be aware of background information on health and behaviour
- To know where to house the animal and keep it safe
- To know what veterinary care the animal has already had

### **Correct handling equipment for the animal being handled/restrained**

Physically controlling or restraining an animal may include using equipment such as:

- Muzzles
  - May be purpose-made or improvised, and often used for dogs
  - Assessment of the animal will determine the type of muzzle required
- Slip leads
  - Can be used to control a non-aggressive dog
  - Can be used as a pair, one from each side of the animal, (known as double leading) to provide additional control
- Rigid leads or graspers
  - Should be used if the behaviour of a dog is unknown
  - Can be used for some wild animals, such as foxes and badgers
  - Can be used as a pair to provide additional control
- Snake tongs or graspers
  - Can be used to capture and restrain snakes and other animals, such as cats

- Nets
  - Can be used for many species of smaller animals, but need to be suitable for the size and strength of the animal
  - May be of a traditional hoop, triangle or square type
  - Other types, such as throw nets or 'walk toward' nets can be used
- Extension poles
  - Lightweight, interlocking, aluminium poles that can provide additional reach when controlling or restraining an animal
  - Capture or restraining equipment, such as graspers or nets, can be attached to the extension poles
- Towels, cloths or blankets
  - May be purpose-made or improvised, and can assist with the capture and control of a range of smaller animals and deer
  - Covering the head or eyes may calm some species
- Halters
  - May be purpose-made or improvised, and are mainly used to control the head of larger domesticated animals, or if the animal is being chemically restrained
  - Can be used for smaller livestock such as goats, sheep and young bovines
- Head collars
  - Purpose-made devices, in a range of sizes, primarily for the head control of equines

**Leash:**

The most common tool used to handle animals in the clinic is the leash. Placed around a dog's neck it normally controls even the largest dog. In the event a dog refuses to cooperate with a leash – carry him. Some dogs have never seen a leash and will freeze up to the sensation around a sensitive area like the neck. Leashes can be abused; never drag or strangle an animal with a leash; if the animal starts to struggle, pulling and jerking away from you, she is probably not leash trained. Pause and let the dog calm down and try again after reassuring her. Sometimes a quick tug on the leash will encourage a fearful dog to walk. If the dog refuses to walk, apply a muzzle (if necessary) and carry her. When handling cats, a leash should be used as a back-up in the event the cat should become frightened and resist restraint. Make a figure-eight harness by looping the free end of a slip lead back through the metal ring. The looser loop is placed around the chest behind the cat's front legs and the other loop placed around the neck with the metal ring/handle on top between the shoulders. This will prevent the cat from escaping or injuring someone should she get loose from your restraint. The harness should be put on at intake and can be left on the cat throughout their stay.

EVERY animal being transported or handled in the clinic must ALWAYS wear a slip-lead. This includes puppies, cats and sedated animals. It is too easy for a frightened animal to get loose and escape. Animals presented on leash/collar should be transferred to a slip lead and the leash returned to the client so that it is not lost during the animal's stay.

**Your hand:**

A very effective form of restraint, your hands are sensitive to the amount of pressure that is being exerted on the animal and can be quickly modified to the situation. Hands can be used to gently stroke a dog or to firmly grasp a struggling cat. Although hands can be the most versatile, they are also the most vulnerable to injury. Recognising when they would not be effective is very important.

**Towels:**

A towel or blanket is a very useful tool for cats and small dogs. A towel can be used to decrease an animal's arousal by covering the head and body and can help protect from sharp claws.

**Come-a-long or control pole:**

The control pole is used to safely handle extremely aggressive dogs. Used appropriately it is an effective tool. Inappropriate or unskilled use can cause serious injury to the animal. The control pole may further distress an upset animal and should only be used when the handler or other's safety is genuinely threatened. Volunteers are NOT to use the control pole unassisted. If an animal is aggressive enough to warrant the use of a control pole an experienced staff member should be consulted for assistance as the animal will also be evaluated for chemical restraint options.

**Nets:**

The net is the primary tool used to handle fractious cats or wildlife. It allows for the safe handling and transfer of even the most aggressive small mammal. Effective use of the net requires some training and practice. If you need to handle a feral or fractious cat ask for assistance from a staff member.

**Muzzles:**

Muzzles are used when a snappy or potentially aggressive dog must be handled. There are nylon muzzles and plastic basket available. A leash or strip of rolled gauze can be used as a temporary muzzle. Because dogs often try to remove a muzzle, it is important that the muzzle be placed securely. A weak or poorly made muzzle may lead to a false sense of security and the possibility of being bitten. Even with a securely placed muzzle, appropriate handling must be used to prevent injury from an animal who resists. Muzzles designed for cats extend up to cover the eyes, reducing visual stimulation. For some cats these can be very useful for calming the animal and helping to protect the handler from injury,

**Drugs:**

For animals who are too aggressive or stressed to handle safely for procedures, sedation and/or general anaesthesia may be necessary to allow treatment. If you are unable to handle an animal, notify a staff member to determine whether sedation is appropriate. When receiving an animal for surgery who exhibits difficult or aggressive behaviour consult the Anesthesia Lead prior to kennelling the animal as we may opt to administer a preanesthetic sedative immediately and expedite the surgery process to minimise the animal's time in the clinic.

**Credo:**

Never Let Go.

The place where correct use of restraint is the most critical is when two people are handling the animal. This could be to perform a physical exam, administer anaesthetic or to give medications. The "holder" is the person whose job it is to restrain the animal in such a way that the procedure can be accomplished with the least amount of stress to both handlers and animal. The specific amount of restraint used to control the animal is the key to safety for the handlers and comfort for the animal. Too much restraint can cause the animal to fight back, too little restraint can result in the handler or others being injured or in the animal escaping.

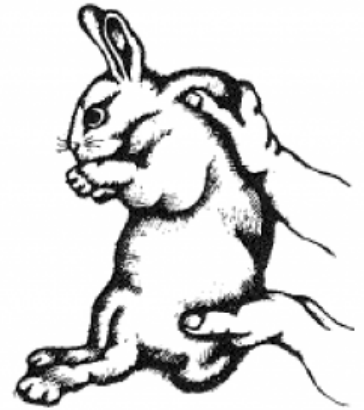
## How to handle and restrain animals correctly and safely

### Rabbit Restraint & Handling

**Picking Up** - Grab scruff of the neck with one hand and lifting up while placing the other hand under the rump for support or wrap patient securely in a towel.

**Holding** - Use the same technique but the hand under the rump is moved to support the abdomen.

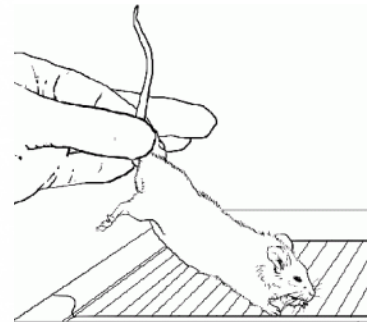
Rabbits seldom bite but many cause injury with their hind legs or may be injured if placed on a smooth surface. Rabbit's foot pads are covered with fur which causes a lack of traction. Can lead to dislocation of their hip or spinal fracture, when they try to move or hop.



### Rodents & Ferret Restraint & Handling

**Mice** - Grasp the tail close to the body with one hand. Use the other hand to grasp loose skin in the neck and shoulder area.

**Larger Rodents and Ferrets** - Make sure the animal is awake to avoid bites. Hold in one hand, cup other over its head. Wrap thumb and index finger around neck and under chin. Do not over tighten fingers around chest as this can impair breathing.



### Avian Restraint

Highly trained personnel needed

Can stress easily

Do not squeeze thorax

Sensitive to overheating

Small to medium sized - Grasp from behind, finger and thumb on sides of head, others around body

Large birds - require 2 hands. Towel can also be used.



### Cats Restraint & Handling

Cats tend to be one of the most difficult during restraint when they become upset and aggressive from stress.

#### Safely restrain and have control over head

Cat bags: control the limbs and head

Squeeze cages: wire boxes with small slots that allow injections to be given

To work around head: Wrap or swaddle in a blanket or place in "cat bag." Allows handler to grasp and hold the back of the head between the thumb and fingers.

Anesthesia chamber can be used when absolutely necessary. However, there are many safe anaesthetic protocols that can be used to sedate aggressive cats

When necessary, the scruff technique can give the handler control over head. This can also be used to distract their attention away from an area you are working on. However, other more effective restraint techniques should be considered first.

The stretch technique involves scruffing the cat with one hand while in lateral recumbency and using the free hand to hold the rear limbs and pull them dorsally



**Dog Restraint & Handling**

Standing restraint - Place one arm under the dog's neck with the forearm, holding the head. The other arm is placed around the animal's body to pull it close to the handler. Can be used on floor or table

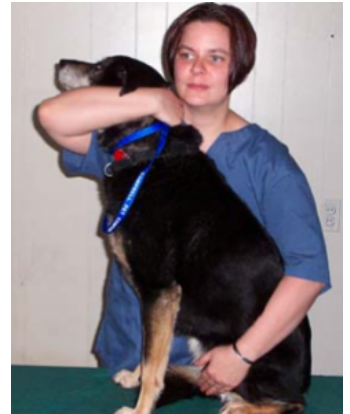
Use - General Exams, Specimen Retrieval, Nail Trims

Sitting Restraint

Same technique as standing restraint, but dog is sitting

Can be against wall to keep dog from backing up

Use: General Exams, Cleaning ears, Blood draw

**Additional Canine Techniques**

Rabies pole or snare pole should only be used when absolutely necessary. A rabies Pole has a noose on the end, and acts as a leash. Captures and restrains dogs. Pulling can cause severe head and neck injuries

**Large Animal Restraint**

Livestock, horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and swine

Instincts of prey animals "Fight or Flight" instinct as part of reaction to restraint

Capable of: Kicking, Biting, Rearing up into the air, Using their large bodies to injure

**Restraint Tools Reviewed**

- Flat leashes – short leashes that have a choker type loop at one end. used to lead a dog but also as a "lasso" to remove a fearful/cage protective animal from a kennel
- Choker collars – when used properly, can be an effective tool, should never be continually kept tight, should not be used in patients with neck or back pain
- Harnesses – are very useful in small dogs or in dogs that have tracheal/neck problems as a "handle" by which the dog can be controlled
- Muzzles – should be used whenever a painful procedure is attempted, or the patient has previously demonstrated aggressive or nervous behaviour, can be canvas, leather or made using a flat leash or gauze, may have a calming effect on a dog
- E-collar – very useful in brachycephalic dogs (pugs etc.) that are difficult to muzzle, will keep the mouth away from the handler
- Blankets/towels – very useful for removing small dogs from kennels by wrapping the blanket around the animal and lifting them out
- Cage door – can be used as a "squeeze cage" with extremely aggressive animals in order to sedate them, extreme caution should be used with this technique
- Capture pole/rabies pole – should only be used in extreme cases where there is a definite danger to staff.
- The most important tool for an aggressive or fearful patient is experienced personnel!