

# Collars risk causing neck injuries in dogs, study shows

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A study led by a canine scientist at Nottingham Trent University looked at the potential impact of pulling on the lead and the related pressure on the neck, using a variety of collar-types and styles.

The collars and a slip lead were tested on a canine cylinder [neck](#) model with a [pressure](#) sensor.

A range of forces were applied to the lead representing different interactions—a firm pull (40 Newtons) strong pull (70N) and a jerk (141N) – with the contact area of the collar and the pressure on the neck being recorded.

The study, which also involved the University of Nottingham, found that with all the collar types and styles tested—even those that were padded or had a wide fitting—the pressure exerted on the model neck would be sufficient to risk injury to the dog.

No single collar tested provided a pressure considered low enough to reduce the risk of injury when pulling on the lead, they found.

Lead jerks on the collar may occur when [dogs](#) on extendable leads abruptly come to a stop, when a dog lunges on a lead, or is 'corrected' by the handler.

The researchers argue that as all collar types will pose some risk, dogs should be trained to walk on a loose lead without pulling, or walked using a harness which applies no pressure to the neck.

"All types of dog collar have the potential to cause harm when the dog pulls on the lead," said Dr. Anne Carter, a researcher in Nottingham Trent University's School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences.

She said: "While collars provide a means to identify a dog or demonstrate ownership, they are also frequently used as a connection between handler and dog and to facilitate control, restraint or movement.

"Even the 'best' type of collar is putting too much pressure on the dog's

neck if they pull on the lead and this is risking injury. We suggest that collars should be used to display ID tags and dogs should be walked on a harness or loose lead that avoids any pressure on the neck.

"It is not recommended that collars be used as a means of control for any dogs that may pull on the lead."

Study co-author Dr. Amanda Roshier, from the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, University of Nottingham, said: "Using sophisticated engineering tools, we simulated collar pressures that dogs may be exposed to on the lead and how this varies with different collar models, and the force exerted by a handler. Our tests aimed to give practical insight into how the choice of collar and its use impacts the welfare of dogs."

Rachel Casey, Director for Canine Behaviour and Research at Dogs Trust, said: "It's a common problem for owners that their dog pulls on the lead, when excited to get out on a walk. The findings of this research highlight the extent to which all collars exert pressure on the sensitive tissues of dogs' necks when there is tension on the lead. It is for this reason that we recommend that owners attach a lead to a well fitted harness—particularly if their dog is likely to pull on the lead during a walk or if they use a long line during walks.

"Walks are also made more pleasurable for pet and owner if dogs are taught to walk calmly on a loose lead. Taking a bit of time to teach your dog that he or she can get to the park without pulling, will save a lifetime of pulled arms as well as avoiding possible injury to your dog. We have a range of resources available online on how to teach your dog to walk on a loose lead using a reward-based approach."

The study was undertaken at the Wolfson Labs, in the Faculty of Engineering with support from bioengineer Professor Donal McNally,

also of the University of Nottingham.

The research is reported in the journal *Vet Record*.

**More information:** Anne Carter et al. Canine collars: an investigation of collar type and the forces applied to a simulated neck model, *Veterinary Record* (2020). [DOI: 10.1136/vr.105681](https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.105681)

Provided by Nottingham Trent University

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