

The official Speaking of Dogs Monthly Newsletter

APRIL 2024

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Ask the Trainer

Unraveling the Dangers of Retractable Leashes

A goal for most owners is walking nicely on leash, to ensure that dogs and owners are always safe, and the dogs walk on a leash that is relaxed, loose and with no tension. Using proper equipment can make a walk comfortable and safe for both the dog and the owner. This article addresses the dangers and pitfalls of using a retractable leash.

Using a retractable or extendable leash for your dog may seem convenient, but it comes with potential risks that every pet owner should be aware of. While these leashes offer increased freedom for dogs to explore their surroundings, they also pose several hazards to both the dog and their owner and, in some cities or towns, do not meet the requirements of Animal By-Laws.



As mentioned above, a loose leash is the goal for a nice, easy walk. A retractable or extendable leash prevents this from happening, as the dog is constantly adding tension to the leash. The design of a retractable leash allows the dog to move forward when they pull – which creates tension – and provides very little control for the owner.

Here are 5 dangers of using retractable leashes:

1. Lack of Control: Retractable leashes can compromise your ability to control your dog effectively. The design of retractable leashes means that the handle and “storage” area for the retractable cord are quite bulky. This makes it hard to easily transfer between hands or untangle if it gets wrapped around you or your dog. The long length of the leash makes it difficult to respond quickly in an emergency, such as encountering other animals, pedestrians, or traffic. We know of dogs that had full extension of their leashes, ran out into the street and were hit by cars. This lack of control can lead to accidents such as this or confrontations that could have been avoided with a shorter, fixed-length leash.

2. Entanglement, and Hazards: The thin cord of a retractable leash can easily become tangled around objects, people, or the dog itself. This poses a risk of injury to both the dog and people. Burns and cuts on the fingers, legs, and other body parts can occur when the cords or bands of the leash quickly brush by or become wrapped around them. In crowded areas, the extended leash can also create a tripping hazard for pedestrians, potentially causing accidents.

3. Injuries to Dogs: The design of retractable leashes can lead to injuries for your dog. Sudden stops or jerky movements can cause neck, spine, or trachea injuries, especially if the dog is running at full speed and reaches the end of the leash abruptly. Additionally, the thin cord can cause cuts or burns if it gets

wrapped around the dog's legs or body. Further, if the owner ever let go of the handle of the retractable leash, it will fire right at the dog -potentially hitting and harming them, and could scare the dog, causing it to run away dragging the retractable leash. This is a huge risk, as now your dog is running loose and dragging their retractable leash through the park or streets.

4. Unpredictable Reactions: Dogs on retractable leashes may exhibit unpredictable behaviors when they encounter other animals, people, or stimuli. The sudden release of tension as the leash extends can create excitement or anxiety in the dog, leading to erratic behavior that may be challenging to manage.

5. Safety Concerns for Owners: Owners using retractable leashes may be at risk themselves. If their dog suddenly bolts or pulls, in addition to the thin cord potentially causing burns or cuts to the hands, the sudden force from a large or strong dog can result in a fall or injury.

So, as you see, there are many reasons you should not be walking your dog on a retractable leash. They are bulky and hard to handle. The length of the leash makes it difficult to keep an appropriate distance between dogs or people you may meet. Yes, the leash can be locked but, if the leash becomes unlocked, the dog can rush up to another dog or other people. The other dogs they rush to may be timid, frightened, or unsure. These are some of the potential risks, to you, your dog and others, of using this type of leash.

Some towns and cities have by-law requirements that state all dogs must be walked on a restraining device of not more than 2 meters in length, attached to a collar or harness, and with sufficient strength to restrain the dog. If you are unsure of your municipal requirements, check with your local Animal By-Law Officers.

If you do choose to use a retractable leash, it's crucial to be aware of your surroundings, maintain a firm grip, and use it responsibly. To ensure the safety of both you and your dog, we encourage you to consider using a standard fixed-length leash 4 or 6 feet in length attached to a properly fitted flat collar or harness. This allows safe control and close supervision. Regularly inspect the leash, collar, and harness for wear and tear and replace them if necessary to prevent accidents.

By making informed choices, you can create a safer and more enjoyable experience for both you and your dog during your walks and outdoor activities.



Written by
Corey McCusker, CPDT-KA

Corey is the founder of [Muttz with Mannerz Canine Academy](#) located in Stouffville. In addition, Corey is an evaluator for St John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program and created the first Kids & K9 Camp in Canada.

Dogs Looking for Homes

Without a doubt, a dog is a real friend.

Our dogs come in all shapes and sizes, but they have one thing in common — they all need loving forever homes.

Open your heart and your home to a rescue dog. You'll be glad you did.

For complete information about the adoption process, please visit www.speakingofdogs.com/adoption-process.

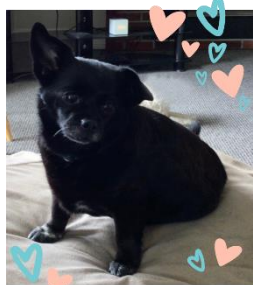
Meet our April Feature Dog : Fifi

Fifi is an approximately 12 yr. old spayed, female, Chihuahua/Pug mix who weighs about 10 lbs.



Fifi is a lovely girl who needs slow, careful introductions so that she doesn't become startled or overwhelmed which may trigger her to air snap. She barks when someone comes to the door but stops shortly after being greeted. She will jump onto your lap, if she feels comfortable and enjoys being petted. Her day starts with a toilet trip outside followed by breakfast, a nap, and then her morning walk. Dinner is around 5 PM and then another walk about 7pm and a final toilet trip outside before bed.

Treats are given after each trip outside and she looks for them. She walks well on leash but will pull when nearing the house. If another dog or person is encountered on her walk, she will often bark at them.



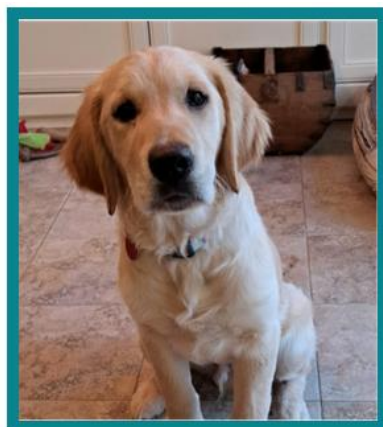
Fifi is fine when left alone and catches up on her napping. She barks when she hears the car return. When travelling in the car, Fifi is quiet in her crate and only gives a bark when the car stops.

She shows anxiety at the sounds of a storm. She is not interested in playing with toys, except for a ball with treats inside (which she often guards). She has also been known to guard her human, food and treats. She would be best in a home where she is the only dog and there are no cats or children. Her ideal home would be with humans who lead a fairly quiet life but are energetic enough to take her for short walks. She needs a patient and understanding home that will respect her boundaries while, at the same time, giving her the love she deserves.

If you think you are the right fit for Fifi, please fill out [an application](#) for our consideration.



Winnie
Beagle/ Border Collie / Mixed
Short Coat
Adult, Female



Finnegan a.k.a. Finn
Golden Retriever
Medium Coat
Baby, Male



Rufus
Yorkshire Terrier "Yorkie"
Medium Coat
Adult, Male



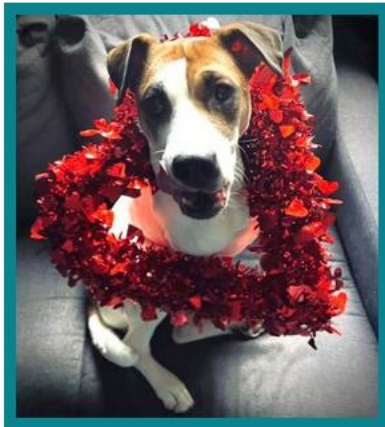
Max
Beagle/ Mixed
Short Coat
Senior, Male



Bella
Saint Bernard
Short Coat
Adult, Female



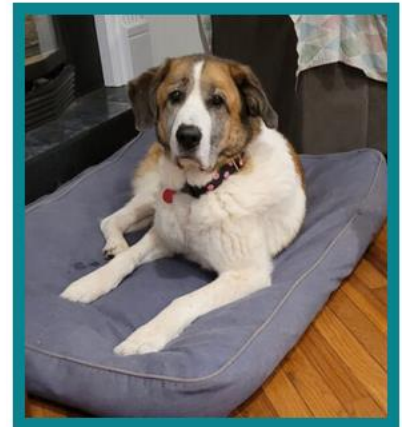
Bob
Labrador Retriever / Mixed
Short Coat
Senior, Male



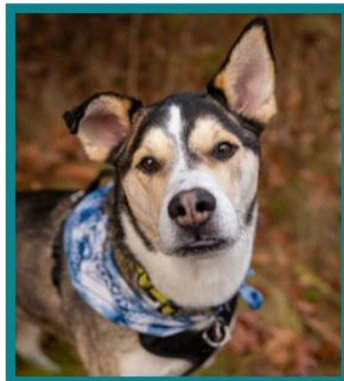
Lylla
Terrier / Shepherd / Mixed
Short Coat
Adult, Female



Rosco
Chinese Crested - Hairless
Short Coat
Senior, Male



Hannah a.k.a. "Anna"
Saint Bernard / Collie / Mixed
Medium Coat
Senior, Female



Pogo
Husky / Mixed
Medium Coat
Adult, Male

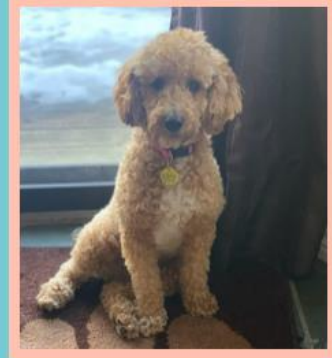
Happy Tails (Recent Adoptions)



Banjo



Bella



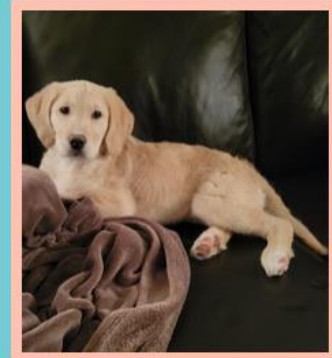
Darren



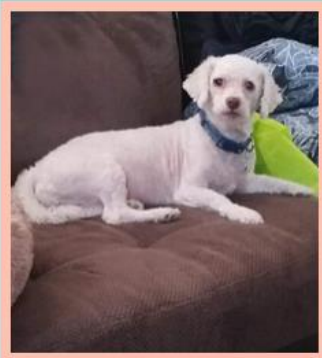
Elsa



Jessie



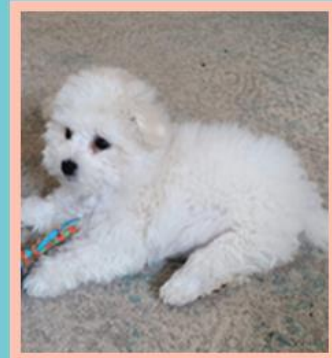
Maggy



Max



Oreo



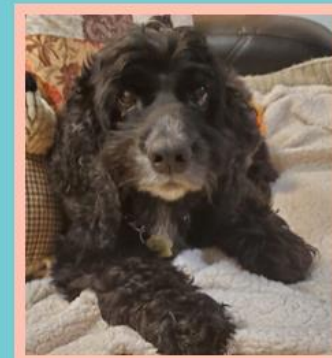
Posey



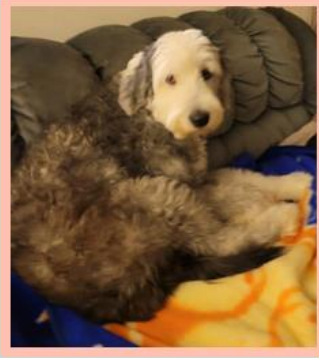
Reggie



Sheila



Smidge



Sophie



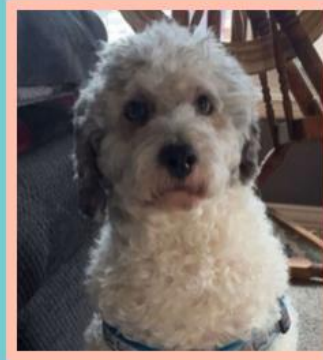
Sunnie



Tallie



Tapioca



William

Adoption Update

Dear Speaking of Dogs Rescue,

Maeve has been a joy to adopt. She is very well house-trained and rarely, if ever, has accidents. We are slowly getting the weight off of her frame. Since she arrived, she has lost enough weight to enable her to jump into our bed and onto the couch. Overall, she is in good health.



Maeve is definitely female centric and has glommed onto Peri as her number one human. If Peri leaves the room, Maeve will follow within 30-60 seconds. She loves to hang out with the kids and is vocal when the door rings.

There have been no health issues. She gets regular check ups and the proper shots and medication. She gets along well with our Pomeranian Zorra and is helping her in her senior years. We are developing a real soft spot for Chihuahuas. We are completely in love with her and adore her.

We enjoy the newsletter.

Regards,

Tom & Peri



Mark your calendars for
Saturday, June 22nd & Sunday, June 23rd
for the return of
Woofstock!

* Please note that those who volunteered will receive more details from us in the next couple of months.



Save the Date for our annual
Step Up for the Pups: Rainbow Walk



This year it will be held on Saturday June 22nd

In honour of the dogs we've loved and lost, this year we are calling our annual spring fundraiser 'Step Up for the Pups: Rainbow Walk'. This year you have a choice of doing the walk on your own OR doing it with other supporters during Woofstock at Woodbine Park in Toronto.

In Memoriam



Halo

Forever in Foster
Loved by Kathy and Munroe



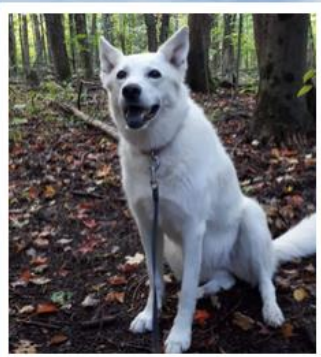
Rosey

Died of parvo on March 16, 2024
Loved by Speaking of Dogs Rescue and
Toronto Health Partners



Neev

Forever in Foster
Loved by Karen and Derek



Lily

Adopted July 2011
Loved by Lisa and Scott

About Speaking of Dogs

Speaking of Dogs Rescue Program is a Canadian registered charity established in the Greater Toronto area (with foster homes across Ontario). Launched in 2001, we are a foster-based, all breed rescue with a focus on senior dogs. We are run solely by volunteers with a mission to help homeless dogs in need by providing shelter or sanctuary, necessary medical care, adoption and education.

Newsletter Team

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