

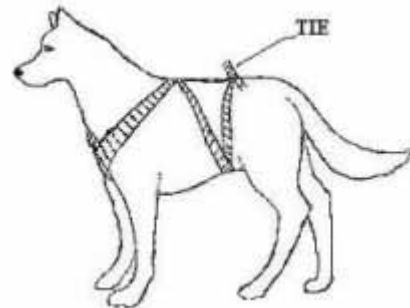
Body Wraps: From a Sensory Perspective

Kathy Cascade, PT, Tellington TTouch Instructor

One of the most useful tools of the Tellington TTouch Method is a simple ace bandage known as a “body wrap.” For years, TTouch and TTEAM Practitioners have been using body wraps to influence an animal’s posture, movement, and behavior. Sometimes the result is subtle, as when a horse picks up a foot to step into a trailer when he couldn’t do it previously, and sometimes the result is seemingly miraculous, as when a dog that is terrified of thunder storms is able to calmly lie down and sleep through the noise. How can a simple piece of cloth have such a wide ranging influence on an animal? Part of the answer lies in how the sensory information from a wrap is processed in the animal’s nervous system.

Typically, a body wrap is applied to an animal’s body in some sort of figure eight fashion, making contact around the chest and crossing over the back, sometimes extending to the hindquarters. (Of course we can also use body wraps for people in any number of configurations).

While the wrap is applied comfortably, it is never put on tightly, as the purpose is simply to bring awareness to the area of the body it contacts, rather than for any type of support. Because of the slight stretch inherent in an ace bandage, the contact provides a light sensation of pressure against the body that also moves slightly as the animal moves. This has the effect of bringing a heightened attention to or awareness of how an animal is using his body parts during movement.



To understand how this works, let’s take a very oversimplified look at the sensorimotor system. Our bodies take in information from our senses, including the well-known senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch (tactile system). We also have another sensory system that provides information about the position of our body parts which is known as the proprioceptive system. The proprioceptive system is triggered by movement. Information from the tactile and proprioceptive system is sent along nerves to the spinal cord and on to a part of the brain that registers the information, which is known as the somatosensory cortex. What is interesting about this area is that some parts of the body have a greater representation than others. For instance, the face and mouth have a much greater number of sensory nerve endings, and a larger area of the somatosensory cortex is devoted to those body parts. For people, the hand and fingers are also more prominent, and it is no surprise that we are way better at using our fingers than our toes! Once the sensory information is processed, the brain then sends signals back to the muscles for postural control, and movement. This constant two way exchange of information is what allows both people and animals to make coordinated movements, and perform complex physical tasks. By using a body wrap, we simply intensify the sensory information going to the brain from the parts of the body the wrap contacts (through the touch system) and the proprioceptive system when the animal moves while wearing the wrap. The response to this enhanced sensory information is often improved balance, coordination, and/or movement. Occasionally lameness or asymmetrical movement may also be altered.



Because an animal may demonstrate significant changes in gait and movement with a body wrap, it is important to remove the wrap after a short period of time (5-10 minutes) to prevent soreness

from using muscles in a new pattern. As the animal adapts to the new movement pattern, the wrap may be used in more complex performance activities.



In addition to changes in movement and posture, we also often see behavioral changes in an animal when a wrap is applied. Have you ever calmed a fussy baby by wrapping the infant in a blanket? The same principle may just apply when using a body wrap on an animal. Touch sensations are very specific. People and animals can detect light touch (think of a horse feeling a fly on it's back), and pressure touch (the weight of your hand when you lightly stroke your animal). The tactile system also transmits temperature, vibration, and pain. The nervous

system responds differently to each of these types of touch. Very light touch, extremes of temperature, and pain elicit a withdrawal response and these sensations serve a protective function. They tend to be alerting. Pressure touch is calming and elicits an approach response. TTouch is done with this light pressure, and a body wrap also applies the same sensation of pressure. In general, pressure touch activates the parasympathetic portion of the nervous system, which is the restorative, grounding, and calming part of the nervous system. The calming effects we often witness with a body wrap may be due to the influence of pressure sensations on the nervous system.

The best way to understand the effects of a body wrap is to try it on yourself. Have a friend help you apply a very simple wrap, using a two or three inch width ace bandage. Unroll the wrap and drape it around the back of your neck and let both ends hang as you would a necktie. Now have your friend take both ends under your arms and simply tie or pin them back to the wrap behind your neck. Notice your posture. Are you standing more erect and aligned? Walk around in the wrap and notice your awareness of the area the wrap is contacting. Pay attention to anything else you may notice. Take the wrap off after a few minutes and again notice if your posture is still different from your habitual position. Often you will notice a change even when the wrap is removed, as the nervous system "learned" from the experience.

The body wrap has proven to be one of the most valuable tools in the TTouch "tool box." We can use it to improve movement, posture, and balance, as well as to calm an excited or fearful animal. For dogs, we can also use a t-shirt or coat as a body wrap to give the same type of light pressure sensation to the nervous system. The best part is that an ace wrap can be purchased at your local drug store for under \$4.00 and you probably have plenty of old t-shirts in your drawer!

Body Wrap - Half-Wrap



A-1
B-1
C-1

A-2



A-3
B-2



A-4
HALF-WRAP



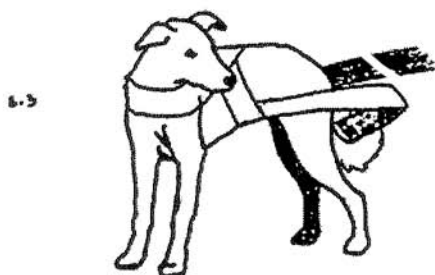
Body Wrap -



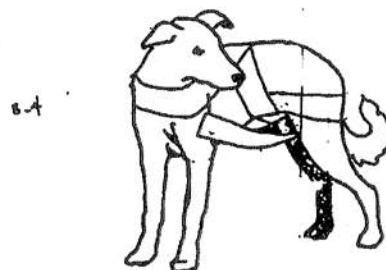
A-1
B-1
C-1



A-2
B-2



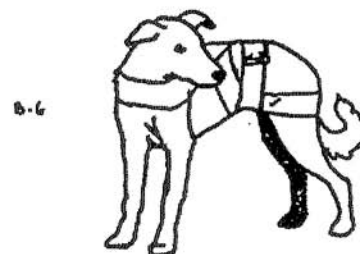
B-3



B-4

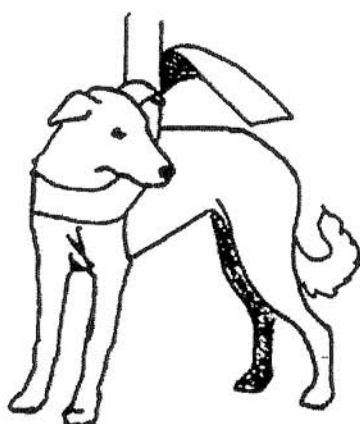


B-5



B-6

Body Wrap -

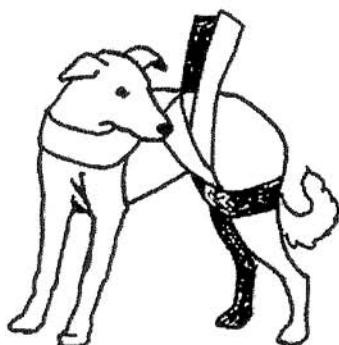


A-1
B-1
C-1

C-2



C-3

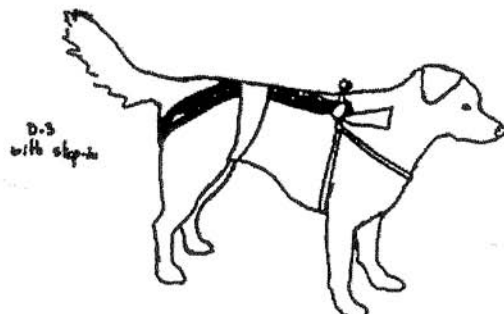
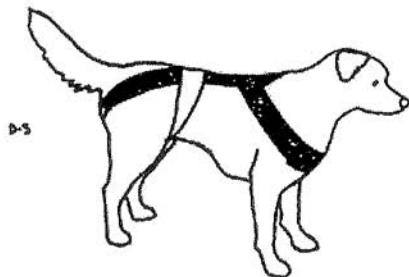
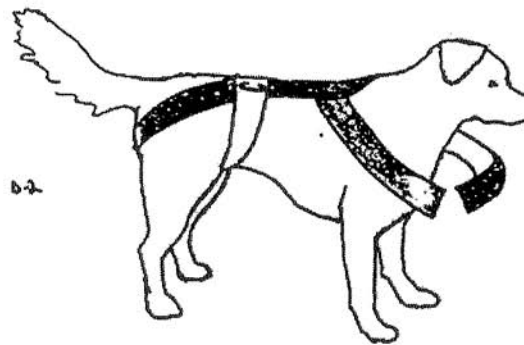
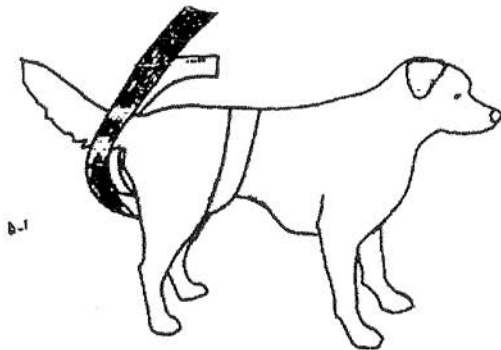


C-4



Body Wrap -

Starting from back end



Body wrap—starting from back end to a step-in harness

Walking In Balance...

Kathy Cascade, PT, Tellington TTouch Instructor

Pulling on the leash is one of the most common complaints I hear from dog lovers. Certainly, it is not easy on the handler or the dog! Carlos, a "puppy" who weighed 160 pounds (see picture) attended a TTouch Training in St. Louis, MO. with his person Cindy. Carlos was a great puller, literally dragging Cindy around at will! With the use of a different approach Carlos learned to how to move and stop "in balance."



Carlos - 160 lb 'puppy' learns to stand in balance.

Typically people lead a dog from a collar around the neck. (I am not sure, but I think the only reason we do this is because we can)! When dogs strain and pull against a collar, the handler tends to pull back more vigorously, or go to a collar that places more pressure on the neck

such as a choke or prong. Unfortunately, steady pulling on the neck tends to increase resistance, allowing the dog to brace against the pull. Pressure on the neck also constricts breathing, which causes increased reactivity, choking, and sometimes damage to the trachea. No doubt you have seen a dog leaning as far forward on the collar as possible, while the handler is leaning backwards trying to hold or pull the dog back. Not exactly a picture of balance! Many of you know that I call this the "water skiing position."

By changing where and how the signal from the leash is given, we can bring a dog back onto all four legs in a balanced stance using more effective signals that don't require force or strength. We have been using a Step-In or H Harness and a special leash with snaps on both ends. These harnesses give us the ability to attach the leash at two separate points, with the primary signal on the chest, rather than the neck. In effect, we can help the dog shift their weight back, bringing them into their own balance. The key is to then release any pressure on the leash, so the dog has nothing to pull against! This neutral leash position (relaxed lead) allows the dog to learn how to first stop and stand in balance and later walk in balance.

Using the harness and two points of leash contact, we then lead the dog through the TTouch "confidence course." This is a simple course with various objects such as a flat board, poles, cones, etc. that we use to engage the dog and improve focus. By making frequent turns and stops, we encourage the

dog to pay attention to both the handler and how to perform the correct movements while staying in balance.

Once we help our dogs understand "being in balance" and adjust how we use the leash, those daily walks are much more pleasant!

Editor's Note: There are a growing number of harnesses on the market that attach the leash to the front of the chest. While we really like the concept, we still use 2-points of contact with these harnesses to help the dog learn to be in balance. We also adjust these harnesses higher on the dog's chest to avoid excessive pull on the dog's shoulders.

Step-in Harness:

The dog steps into this harness and snaps closed at the top and middle of the back. There are 2 rings in the middle of the back and a ring on each side near the top of the shoulder.

These should be fit so they are comfortable snug without being too tight behind the elbow. Check the harness when the dog is lying down to be sure it is not too tight.



Photo left: one end of the leash is attached to the flat collar and the other end to the top rings of the harness.



Photo right: Shows the ends of the leash attached to the rings at the top of each shoulders.



Step-in harness variation: Photo above. If you are standing on the dog's right side, run one end of the leash through the front loop at the dog's chest and attach the snap to the ring on the dog's left shoulder. The other snap is attached to the rings on the top of the dog's back. The handler must stay at the dog's shoulder and give upward signals, rather than backwards, with the leash.

Dogs that are extreme pullers can benefit from this configuration as it acts as a Balance leash but keeps the leash from sliding up.



Balance Leash - Photo & drawing above. You can use nearly any leash to influence a dog's balance and it is simple and very effective to stop pulling.

If you are on the dog's right side the leash is clipped to the collar as usual. Hold the leash in your left hand with your thumb pointing towards the dog's collar. With the right hand holding the end of the leash drop the middle of the leash around the dog's chest from the left shoulder to the right.

Make sure the part of the lead between your left hand and the collar is slightly slack and keep the lightly connection possible on the part of the leash around the dog's chest to keep it in place.

If your dog pulls use a pull and release signal with the line around the chest.. Take care not to draw the lead upward onto the neck.

This is especially effective on medium to large sized dogs.



H-Harness-this type of harness goes over the dog's head and goes around the belly behind the front legs. There will generally be a ring or two on the top of the back and one on the front of the chest.

Photo above: shows one end of the leash on the flat collar and the other on the ring on the top of the back.

Variation: one snap could be attached to the front ring on the chest & the other to the ring at the top of the back.



Balance Leash Plus: Photos above. For small dogs, or for those dogs that back out of the balance leash we have variations. If you are standing on the dog's right side take the leash behind his left elbow and up in between the dog's front legs. You can either use it like this or bring the end of the leash up through the dog's collar at the front. This helps keep the leash from slipping up or the dog from turning out of it.

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Balance Rope Harness

By Robyn Hood

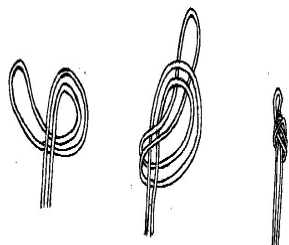
The Balance Rope Harness was first developed for dogs who backed out of the balance leash. Since then we started using the Step-In Harness and the "H" Harnesses which are easier for clients to adjust.

However, for the situations where you don't have the right size of harness or you want to be able to show someone how they can make their own, this is still a valuable tool.

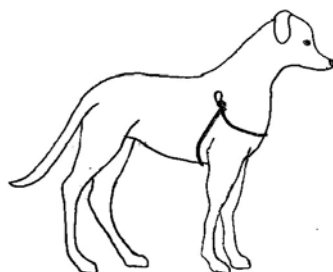
It stays lower on the chest than the balance leash and because it goes under the belly behind the front legs a dog cannot back out of it.

Like the harnesses the balance rope harness allows the handler to give separate signals from two points of contact – the top of each shoulder. This is useful for dogs who pull sideways or those who tend to be clingy. It is also helpful with dogs who freeze or sit down. You can give a forward signal on the belly without pulling on the dog's neck.

As with the balance leash, it prevents from pulling on the dog's neck so is helpful with dogs with bad hips or have weak back legs. It helps to bring a dog into better balance over his/her feet which of course stops pulling and generally improves a dog's self-confidence and self-control.

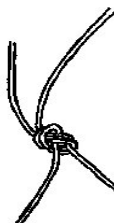


Step 1: start with a rope between 15—18' depending on the size of the dog. Fold the rope about 6" short of being in half and tie an overhand knot with the folded rope make small loop (just big enough to take one of the ropes folded in half through).

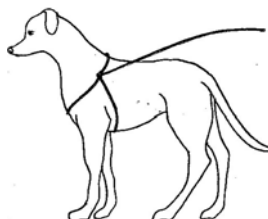


Step 2: Place one end of the rope around the dog's chest and the other under the belly, just behind the elbows.

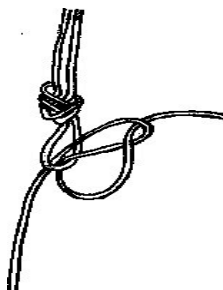
The knot should sit just at the top of the dog's shoulder as shown.



Place a second overhand knot (this one with no loop) at the top of the other shoulder. The knot is made using both ropes.



Step 3: Take one of the ropes across the dog's back to connect the two knots (as described in the next paragraph) and give you two separate ropes for giving signals and steering.



This drawing show how to attach the rope across the dog's back to keep the harness in place. Fold rope going across the dog's back and place it through the first overhand knot you made. Bring the end of the rope through the loop that you just placed through the loop

from the first knot and pull it until it tightens around the loop so the ropes will not continue to tighten if you pull.

Drawing below: shows the final harness. The handler ideally stays at the dog's shoulder to give signals instead of dropping back. You can use the ropes together in one hand or one in each hand. Use an upward signal and release on the rope when asking your dog to stop or slow down.

