

The Red Bandana Project

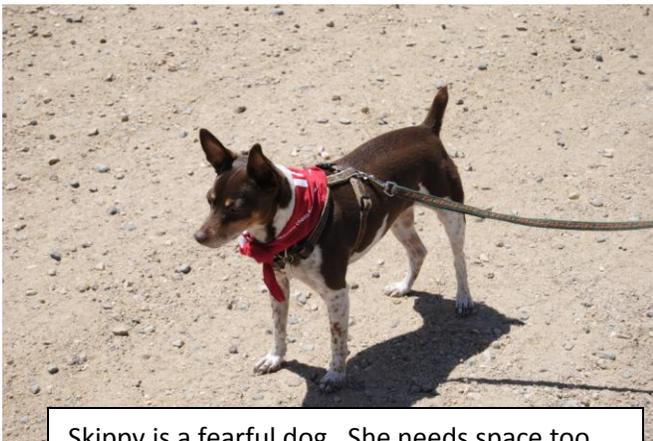
Protecting Our Fearful or Reactive Dogs
Laura Tyler CPDT-KA ACDBC

Horse people know this rule. Never pass close behind a horse with a red ribbon tied to his tail. That red ribbon signals to people this horse might just kick if you get too close. I wonder if, as a community, we may possibly adopt a similar habit of having our reactive or fearful dogs wear a red bandana tied around their neck to signal to others that our dog should not be approached.

For those of us with fearful or reactive dogs, the everyday walk can turn into a stressful event, when we are attempting to keep our dog calm and somebody's loose dog from triggering a bite or fight. Those loose dogs pose a real problem for dogs on leash. If you combine that predicament with a loose dog who doesn't respond to his owners call to return quickly to him, then both dogs are in trouble.



Sandra points out the Red Bandana to a person walking by. Stuart is a really good boy!



Skippy is a fearful dog. She needs space too.

Many performance dogs as well as pet dogs have trouble adjusting to the close proximity of other dogs and people in a congested environment.

I recently attended a seminar on Canine Structure and Movement presented by Dr. Chris Zink.

There were over 20 dogs and 50 people in a large conference room at a hotel in Grand Junction, Colorado. We were required to adhere to the "Red Bandana" rule for dogs that might have issues with other dogs or people during the conference. Other than a few barks and "snarks" over the two days, there was no trouble between dogs or people at all. I even had my shy little Rat Terrier wear the bandana the first day to allow her time to adapt to the environment without people

or dogs getting into her space. Her second day there was much more relaxed for her and the bandana was not necessary.

We all enjoy the opportunity to get out and walk with our dogs. We share the road with other drivers or bicycles, why not share the trail or sidewalk and make sure all dogs are safe? Save the off leash play for the Dog Park or areas out of town where you can see people and dogs coming from a long way off.

Make sure your dog is truly off-leash ready by training a really reliable recall. Respect that person whose dog is wearing a red bandana. After all, that's for your dog's safety and protection too.

Oh, and don't forget to clean up after your dog! (I just had to sneak that one in there!)

Laura Tyler is a certified professional dog trainer with 25 years of experience and has earned associate certification through the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants. She owns Total Teamwork Training LLC here in Northwest Colorado.



Let people know that your dog needs space. He might bark or lunge if they get too close! Work hard at home to teach your reactive dog to sit and focus on you while others pass by. (Sandra & her dog Bull Terrier "Stuart" practice this all the time)