

The Sense-ible™ Harness

Softouch Concepts Inc

“Road Test” by Debra Millikan

PDT, Cert IV Dog Behavioural Training
Association of Animal Behavior Professionals
(www.associationofanimalbehaviorprofessionals.com)

Delta Accredited Canine Good Citizen Instructor
(www.deltasocietyaustralia.com)

One of the good things about being a professional dog trainer is that I get the opportunity to trial various pieces of dog training equipment and really put it to the test. Testing equipment in order to gain valid information that is useful to both the pet dog guardian and to the dog trainer is a rigorous process.

The Dog Blog n Cat Chat Testing Team is a mix of professional dog trainers as well as dog guardians, some of whom have significant training experience with their own dogs and others who have had very little.

In each issue we will bring to you the latest information about new and/or useful products you may have wondered about or perhaps have never thought about. We hope our testing of these things will enable you to make an informed decision on purchases you make on behalf of your pet.

How we will test the products

Our Testing Team will have time to use each of the products we test. They will be given a Feedback Sheet to give various categories a score out of 10. They will also have the opportunity to express their opinions about any aspect of the product. We will let you know the collective results and also pass on to you some of the good and bad points as perceived by our Testing Team. In this way you can better judge for yourself whether or not the product is for you and your pet.

We will use different testing categories on different types of items. The categories used in this issue's test will be used for dog training equipment. We will ensure that our testing methods achieve their aim of giving you up to date and accurate information as perceived by both professionals involved in the industry and by pet guardians.

Facts and figures

The Sense-ible™ Harness was previously compared to eight other harnesses and came second with an overall score of 81% to its more expensive cousin the Sense-ation™ harness (84%). We chose the

Sense-ible™ harness to road test because, although of the same design as Sense-ation™, it is made of slightly different materials. It is minimally cheaper but still gives similar results. In this test of the Sense-ible™ harness, the overall approval rating was 90%.

Efficacy – Does the harness do what the company claims it does?

Softouch Concepts describes the Sense-ible™ harness as one to be used to help develop a calm and responsive dog. Some of the claimed benefits are:

- Prevents choking, stress and injuries
- Helps solve pulling, lunging, jumping and other on-leash problems
- Good for shy, nervous and fearful dogs
- Greatly increases communications between you and your dog
- Keeps your dog happy
- Easy on and off
- All dogs can benefit
- It can be used straight away. Your dog doesn't have to get used to it
- Easier to walk two dogs
- Has a calming effect

The short answer to whether or not the harness lives up to these claims is YES! There was an 89% approval rating from the Testing Team.

Comments from Testing Team:

- “I was a bit sceptical at first as I have a large dog but I have found the Sense-ible™ Harness extremely efficient, reliable and a lot more dog friendly.” (Guardian with over 12 months training experience)
- “Heinz pulled constantly with his neck collar attached to a lead, however, with the harness he walks like a dream. No more pulling!” (Guardian with little training experience)
- “For me it has made walking two dogs much more manageable.” (Guardian with over 12 months training experience)

Dog's comfort level and acceptance

The Testing Team was asked to consider how their dog accepted the harness simply being placed on him and used immediately without having time to “get used to it”. Here the harness shone with a score of 95%.

Comments from Testing Team:

- “I have had much more success with this harness than with the head collar or other harnesses. My dog has also tolerated this harness the best as it appears to be the most comfortable and causes her the least distress when putting it on.” (Guardian with little training experience)
- “Ebony hated the head halter and would stop every few metres to try to get it off. The Sense-ible™ harness had an instant positive effect on her loose leash walking and she accepted it without any problems.” (Guardian with over 6 months training experience)



Harness and soft collar may be connected together with the lead during times of high arousal to ensure safety...

- “The Sense-ible™ harness was a huge quantum leap over a head leader! Even better control and no irritation for the dog.” (Guardian with over 6 months training experience)
- “You can almost see the dogs say “thank you” when the pressure on their heads and necks is relieved by the Sense-ible™ harness. Is it any wonder they are happy to walk nicely on a loose leash?” (Professional dog trainer)

Construction: Are the materials, fittings and construction of high quality?

Made of high grade nylon webbing, with curved side-release buckle and strap keepers, the harness has straps that are adjusted with metal adjuster hardware and nickel plated, steel O-Rings. The quality of the construction, materials and buckles on the harness received an overall score of 94% from the Testing Team.

Comments from Testing Team:

- “This product is soundly constructed with very little that can irritate the dog. If used in compliance with the instructions, this harness will last a lifetime.” (Professional dog trainer)
- “The harness did cause some matting under the front legs of my long haired dog; however my dogs found it to be MUCH more comfortable than a head halter and this, along with the improved walking whilst wearing it makes it my choice over head halters.” (Guardian with over 12 months training experience)

Value for Money: Is it worth what you pay for it?

The current prices ranges from \$25 for the extra small harness (weight range 5-9kg, girth 419- 520mm) to \$32 for the extra large (weight range 59-90kg, girth 990-1270mm). The width of the webbing also varies according to size in order to ensure the utmost comfort for the big shouldered or wide framed dog. The Testing Team gave this category 95%.

Comments from Testing Team:

- “Great value for money.” (Guardian with over 12 months training experience)
- “The product is brilliant and a great purchase.” (Guardian with over 12 months training experience)
- “Excellent exchange and return policy.” (Guardian with little training experience)
- “Can you put a dollar value on something that makes dog walking simpler, loose lead training faster and is dog friendly as well? If only other problems could be resolved so inexpensively! Great value for money.” (Professional dog trainer)

Aesthetics – What does it look like and does it have a colour to suit you?

Here the harness scored 85%. The basic colour range is black, blue and red for the Sense-ible™ harness. Most people find that the “little black number” suits their needs. There was only one request for more colour options from the Testing Team but the general consensus seemed to be that they would rather have efficiency than a huge colour range.

Adequacy of instructions for size selection, fitting and use

This category scored 81% overall. The size range, giving both girth and weight makes choosing an appropriate size much easier than some other harness products. Although fitting instructions in the information booklet are very clear and include pictures that supplement the written instructions, initially some of the Testing Team did have a little difficulty in fitting the harness. Others had no difficulty whatsoever. It was believed that the assistance of a trainer who knows how to use the harness is beneficial for its initial use but not necessary.

Comments from Testing Team:

- “Once you get used to it the harness is easy to use.” (Guardian with little experience)
- “For the pet guardian with little experience of training and training equipment I can see that they may at first be daunted by the harness. However, this harness is actually very simple for the guardian to place on the dog. Once the initial adjustments are made so as it fits correctly there should be no need for any major adjustment. It is always advisable to ensure that the fit is checked regularly to ensure correctness and of course, with a growing puppy, adjustments will need to be made as the puppy grows. With big puppies a second harness may be needed as they outgrow the smaller one.” (Professional dog trainer)

Ease of Adjustability, Fitting and Use

The Testing Team gave a score of 85% to the ease of adjusting the harness. Once the initial adjustments were made, fitting (which scored 93%) is as simple as placing the loop over the



dog’s head and closing one buckle under the girth. A score of 89% was given to how easy the harness was to use.

Comment from Testing Team:

- “Even for guardians not willing or able to put effort into loose leash training at least with this product it is doing no harm, is comfortable and safe for the dog to wear and easy for the guardian to put onto the dog.” (Professional dog trainer)

Suitability rating

Top marks were scored in this category. The question asked of the Testing Team was “Is this piece of equipment suitable for the dog on which you tested it?” 96% of respondents answered with a resounding YES. With one exception the Team members said they would happily recommend it. The one person who did not tick the recommendation box did tick the box indicating preference for the harness over a head collar.

A wag in the tail!

The final say goes to another of our Testing Team, a pet guardian and professional trainer who is so impressed with the harness she says “It is a brilliant product. I love it so much I am speaking to strangers in the street about it!”

Where can you get it?

Adelaide Pet Dog Training’s co-owner, Bodil Schou-Hansen, is the South Australian Agent for Softouch Concepts Inc. She was involved in the first Australian test of the harness and was so impressed by its efficacy and benefits that she became the agent here. To check out the harness go to www.petdogtraining.com.au and in the Products section you will find more pictures and details about the harness. Bodil can be contacted by phone on 8272 0018 or email bschouhansen@gmail.com and she will assist you to obtain the very useful and effective Sense-ible™ Harness.

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A Big Thank you

Dog Blog n Cat Chat would like to thank the dogs, students and instructors at Adelaide Pet Dog Training (www.petdogtraining.com.au) and Canine Behavioural School (www.positivelydogs.com) for the time and effort put into trialling the harness and completing the paperwork. It has been a learning experience for all of us.

Stop Press

Of our Road Test, Linda Lady, designer of the Sense-ible™ harness and owner of Softouch Concepts says “What a thorough and helpful survey! I like how a variety of aspects have been covered and that comments from the testing team are included. I can assure you the constructive criticism is appreciated as well as the positive feedback. Equipment testing is what the industry needs; everyone benefits including the dogs. Thank you to you and your testing team!”