

*The Sea Meadow Products Company*  
**EQUIPMENT • TIMES**

REMARKS BY TRAINERS AND MANUFACTURERS ON THE QUALITY GOODS OFFERED BY SEA MEADOW PRODUCTS COMPANY

## All Those Jafco Muzzles

"**JAFCO**" is the name of a K-9 training equipment company owned and operated by James A. Faggiano of Pleasanton, Ca. Although Jim has introduced a number of very interesting products over the years (including, as some of you will recall, a virtually indestructible cuff for protection sleeves); the company is probably best known for its line of plastic muzzles.

The JAFCO muzzles are renowned for their lightweight, durability, and ease of cleaning. They are available in a wide variety of sizes and styles, and Sea Meadow Products stocks those that fit the breeds that, like you and I, work for a living.

Before Jim and I got into our interview, -we did a muzzle attack featuring "Kemo," a police service dog, Van Rader (the victim), and handler Mark Redeker. The dog was strapped into a JAFCO Single Strap Muzzle, Size 4. The product is SMPC's item 101, and retails for \$22.50.

After the attack, which was a success, the group adjourned to a local restaurant for coffee and goodies, during which Jim and I talked about his product.

By- **Mike McKown**

**MCKOWN:** Okay, Van, you were the bad guy during this attack. What was your impression of the quality of- the hit from this dog?

**RADER:** Very good, very hard.

**MCKOWN:** Have 'you recovered?

**RADER:** Slowly but surely, I'll get there.

**MCKOWN:** Was there any problem with the muzzle?

**RADER:** No problem with the muzzle. You feel the impact of the dog.; even with the muzzle on.

**MCKOWN:** What was your impression of this event?

**REDEKER,** I think the dog did really well. He didn't choke up at the last minute. He came right in and did a hit on the bad guy and took him down. He hit him low: my dog likes to go low, which makes it difficult for sleeve work sometimes, and it's much more realistic this way. The dog is allowed to come right on in and hit the way he normally would, take the bad guy down, and hold him for me.

**MCKOWN:** What do you mean, "Choke up"?

**REDEKER:** Some dogs will tend to come in and slow up and try to maintain the speed of the suspect, anticipating a bite on the arm. But with the muzzle, the dog can go right on in, and he'll take anything he can get hold of. I think this is the best simulation you can do.

**MCKOWN:** Do you regularly use a JAFCO muzzle on this dog?

**REDEKER:** Yes. I would say we use a muzzle attack almost exclusively. We very rarely use a sleeve on the dog at all.

We had a problem with the sleeve work and this dog the first couple years we had 'em. We would hide the sleeve behind the bad guy; the dog would find the sleeve and could care less about the bad guy. So we had to motivate the dog from looking for the sleeve to looking for the bad guy. The muzzle was the way we were able to do that.

**MCKOWN:** Jim, why did you decide to build your own muzzles?

**FAGGIANO:** Because I got tired of waiting to buy stuff from Germany. Going back to the late '60s and early '70s, sometimes there was as much as a six or eight-week delay. There wasn't a ready availability of good equipment in the country then. So I saw a need to develop something for my own use.

The original muzzle was of leather, in a configuration similar to what I have in the plastic one now. The plastic one evolved in about 1974, 1975.

**MCKOWN:** How did you settle on that design?

**FAGGIANO:** The design was an offshoot of something that was used in England during the late '60s and early '70s during a rabies epidemic. From that idea emerged this particular product.

What I thought we needed was something lightweight, strong, was clean and easy and safe for the dog, without too much consideration for the agitator, yet something that was extremely secure.

It took a little less than a day to come up with the original design. That design hasn't changed much, except that after working with the original one, we added the leather stop piece.

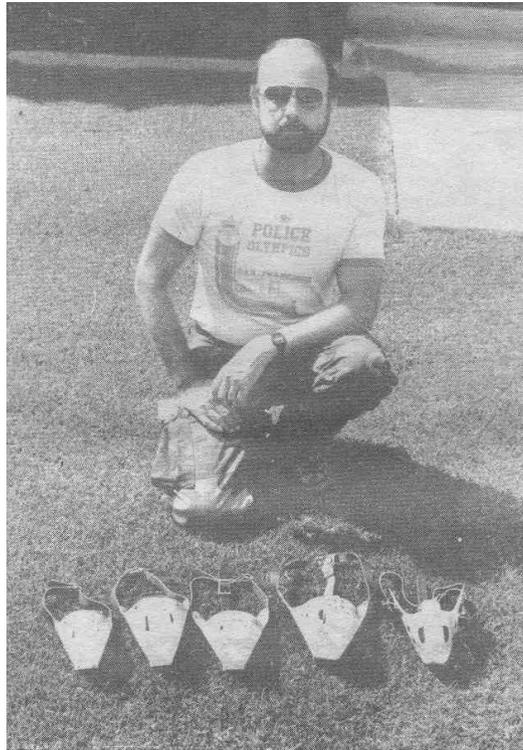


Figure 1. *Jim Faggiano displays the JAFCO models handled by Sea Meadow Products.*

**MCKOWN:** What was the reaction of the muzzle buying public when they saw this thing?

**FAGGIANO:** Oh, it was complete apprehension, and understandably so. In fact, the first time it showed up in a competition was in Martinez (Ca.), and Art O'Keefe, one of the judges, would not allow the dog into the muzzle attack exercise when he had the plastic muzzle on. So, I interjected myself and suggested to Art that he try to take the muzzle off, and that if he could get it off the dog, he could have it, and I'd give him a year's supply of muzzles. He tried, he couldn't get it off, and consequently allowed its use, and it just caught on by itself.

**MCKOWN:** Has the single-strap muzzle ever received any formal endorsements?

**FAGGIANO:** I suppose in the sense that I received a request from a major veterinary medical school in Pennsylvania to supply them with a series of muzzles they would like to use in their graduate school. Following that, they sent me a letter thanking me and stating what they believed was the quality of the muzzle, and subsequently endorsing it, and in fact recommending it to all of the graduate students.

**MCKOWN:** Why don't you tell us why you built it out of plastic, why it has the design that it does, and your motivations for making it the way that you did?

**FAGGIANO:** Well, going back some, my profession initially was a safety engineer, so consequently I'm exposed to a lot of continuing and changing technology and equipment materials processes. I just felt that leather, as good as it is, has its faults. In the area of the muzzle, for example, I think weight, bulk, the fact that after awhile it becomes saturated with saliva, can be misshapen by water, and eventually it gets dirty, it gets bacteria-laden, and I was looking for something that was clean, light, strong, and safe for the dog. I started looking around at different materials, and of course right away began thinking in terms of plastic and came up with the polyethylene.

We originally experimented with a low density plastic which was a little too soft, and went to a high-density, thinner plastic which is what we're still using to-day in our muzzles. The working dog muzzle in its complete form only weighs, about 6 to 6 ¼ ounces, so it's extremely light. I didn't want a lot of encumbrances like straps, so the single strap evolved. The secret is really in the design of the strap that maintains the integrity of the entire unit. Using the analogy of the shoe, the muzzle when fitted like a shoe will remain on. When you buy a shoe, you buy it to fit. If it fits properly and you lace it, it stays on. The muzzle, by the same token, is the same way. If you buy one too big or too little, it's uncomfortable or unsafe.

**MCKOWN:** I notice the Rottweiler muzzle is shaped differently, there's an additional head strap. Why was this done? More conventional design. How come?

**FAGGIANO:** Well, we have a lot of conventional people. And convention seems to be the way of many people who don't want to change. Because there is that segment of society that have their strong belief, or equate a multitude of straps with safety, we still have to meet that need, and consequently we maintain the Four Strap, which was basically our original design.

**MCKOWN:** In terms of the number of muzzles you sell, how does the Four Strap sell in comparison to the Single Strap? What's the ratio of sales, and have people who used to buy the Four Strap gone over to the Single-Strap design? Or has the ratio remained stable?

**FAGGIANO:** The sales ratio runs 20 or 25 (Single-Straps) to 1 (Four- Strap). I do get requests for the Four Strap, and in many cases I encourage them to buy the Single Strap because I firmly believe they'll be happy with it. But where they insist on a choice, I want to meet their needs and will sell it to them. I've had people use it, like it, and turn around and come back and try the Single Strap, and prefer the Single Strap once they've seen it in use and worked it on their dog. It's a natural tendency to have reservations, as was experienced when the muzzle first premiered.

**MCKOWN:** In your opinion, is there any greater margin of safety with the Four Strap over the Single Strap?

**FAGGIANO:** I don't believe there's any greater margin of safety. In fact, I prefer to work agitation with a Single Strap than a Four Strap, simply because with a Four Strap, the handler has to keep checking straps after using it on more than one dog. You stand the chance that maybe the straps aren't adjusted properly. Plus, by virtue of the design, the dogs has more chance of hooking his paws and snagging a dewclaw, or possibly cock a muzzle sideways or pull it off. With the Single Strap, the design is such that it's virtually impossible, or certainly very difficult, for the dog to hook his paws on the muzzle. It's a very clean design. It's very difficult, when it's placed properly on the dog, for the dog to get it off.

**MCKOWN:** What about cost-effectiveness, Jim? This muzzle is so inexpensive that it frightens people.

**FAGGIANO:** Anytime something new comes on the market that is an improved item, by nature we believe in tradition. We also tend to equate price (with quality): If it's high priced, then obviously it has to be better than something that's of lower price. Price doesn't equate with quality or efficiency.

Cost-effectiveness: It's easy to buy five JAFCO muzzles for the price of one of the more detailed German design.

Personally, from feed-back and testimonials, I have been reminded many times that the JAFCO muzzle in its \$20 price range has been as effective or more so than the expensive imports.

**MCKOWN:** What can you use this muzzle for?

**FAGGIANO:** We use it with all the departments I work with, particularly with dogs that have never had any experience with the sleeve, and with young dogs. We start 'em off in muzzle work. We have dogs, never having worked on a sleeve and having been developed in a muzzle, go after suspects with intensity that equals or exceeds a lot of dogs that have been worked on a sleeve. We know the dogs will hit, we know they will bite, and the dogs learn to turn and use their bodies considerably more when contacting the suspect, bringing about a greater possibility of bringing somebody down. And it builds up the drive of the dog to take on anybody they're directed to.



Figure 2 *Van Rader surrenders to "Kemo", Pleasanton PD K9 after muzzle hit.*

**MCKOWN:** Can the dog bark in the muzzle?

**FAGGIANO:** The dog barks. We use the muzzle for searches, we use it in tracking, we use it in all the environments and situations in which we would normally work the dog on the street. And the reason we use the muzzle is to try to get as close to a street situation as possible. And what I mean by that is, in a street situation you encounter people who have never worked with a dog before, and consequently are not agitators. And there's no telling how they're going to behave. And we try to simulate that as much as possible by bringing in different subjects to work as suspects. We use a lot of Explorers from the various departments, and by rotating these people, we set up strangers as often as possible so he's not pre-conditioned to its use when it comes down to a training exercise. So, the training exercise goes down, the dog behaves as closely to how he would were he on the street. We can use people who would not have to worry about taking a bite, or have had to develop a technique, or work with us to be an agitator. In so doing, we have approximated as much as possible what, the dog will see on the street.

For the muzzle to be effective, the dog has to wear it regularly. If you slap it on and use it, and then take it off, it becomes a pre-conditioning exercise. And the dog pretty soon learns that it means a work situation. We want to keep the dog at his normal working best. So that's why a muzzle. Plus the safety element. We can have fights; in ' fact, in one of the latest exercises; unfortunately, you didn't get a chance to see it, we structured a situation where the handler is attacked by half a dozen subjects.

The dog, muzzled, knocks these subjects down or away, clears them away from the handler. It really serves to build the intensity and protectiveness of the dog.

It gets the dog to work from subject to subject without his staying with one person as he might if he were on a sleeve. We have found this to be very, very effective, and probably as close to real life as possible.

**MCKOWN:** There are now imitations of the JAFCO Single Strap out there. Is it your feeling that if people are going to buy a single-strap muzzle, they ought to buy genuine JAFCO?

**FAGGIANO:** Well, imitations are just another form of endorsement of JAFCO. I guess copying is the greatest form of flattery. So what they're telling me is that we have a good product, and therefore they want to copy it. That's why everybody wants to copy Coca-Cola.

**MCKOWN:** Jim, you're a professional trainer for police departments. How many are you working with at the present time?

**FAGGIANO:** I'm currently working with four departments under regular contract, and I lecture at local colleges several times a year on K-9 management. I've authored several articles on various facets of K-9 use and training, I've been fortunate in judging several trials including the international police Olympics and the police Olympics, I've been involved in some AKC judging and judged for Dogs for the Blind. I've been working with dogs for a little over 20 years, and it's an avocation that I thoroughly enjoy.

**MCKOWN:** So the value of JAFCO muzzles is something that is proven in everyday use with you right on the scene, it's not something you just whipped out.

**FAGGIANO:** That's very true. Going back to how it started, I originally developed it for my own use, and others wanted to buy it, so that's how I got into the business of selling it. My initial intent was to have my own line of equipment for my own particular use.

**MCKOWN:** "JAFCO" was derived from which words?

**FAGGIANO:** JAFCO is a silly acronym for James Faggiano Company. I see myself as a person who likes to break from tradition and look for high-tech and new methods of designing equipment. Hence, I'm constantly looking for better ways to use various technological items in training, including radio headsets used in training; new materials for use in hidden sleeves, innovative ideas on leashes and items of wear that, if we're satisfied with their use, will premiere and will be a marked improvement over equipment that's currently in use. But, of course it's all subject to our use and our testing; and if we're not satisfied with it, we're not going to try to sell it to anybody else.

*The items under discussion are Item 101 (Single-Strap, Size 4), \$22.50; Item 102 (Single-Strap, Size 3), \$22.50; Item 103 (Male Rottweiler Muzzle), \$34.00; Item 104 (Female Rottweiler Muzzle), \$34.00; and Item 105 (4-Strap, Size 4), \$38.00.*

*You get three free issues for every \$50.00 you buy in a single order from Sea Meadow Products! Extend - or get a new - subscription in your name when you place a large order! Buy from SMPC! We can ship by ground or air the same day you place your order! We accept COD, Visa, MasterCard, and departmental purchase orders!*

**July 1985 - Dog Sports Magazine**

\* \* \* \*