

Electronic Collars...(shock collars)

DEB HAINES·WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2020·

Here in Animal Sense: Basic Training And Behavior, We do not recommend the use of the Electronic Collar to members. Please Do NOT suggest this tool.

What is an electronic collar used for?

A shock **collar** for dogs, also known as electric **collars**, **e-collars**, or remote dog training **collars**, is a device put on a dog that uses a short, small voltage electrical shock (referred to as “stimulation”) to correct behavior in dogs and train them.

Food for thought...When the dog is sent home with his new shock collar and the remote control is now in the hands of his much-less experienced owner, it’s inevitable that the collar will be activated at inappropriate times: when the dog *tried* to do the wanted behavior but the owner didn’t recognize it as such, after the dog had stopped doing the unwanted behavior but the owner’s timing was delayed, when the owner is angry at the dog for perceived misbehavior, and so on. As the “corrections” make less and less sense to the dog, and he fails to clearly see what behaviors work to stop the pain and which don’t, his “training” will deteriorate – and so will the relationship between the dog and his owner.

There is a greater chance for abuse (delivery of shocks as punishment) or misuse (poor timing of shocks). Your dog also may associate the painful shock with people or other experiences, leading to fearful or aggressive behavior.”

Electronic Collars...(shock collars)

This article is written by ... Sophia Yin, DVM, MS

Trainers often debate about the use of electronic shock collars. Some trainers find these collars unethical and unsafe. The pro-collar camp takes a different stance. Some say it just distracts the dog, calling it “tap technology” and others say it may be painful at the instant but then the dog learns to behave and there are no lasting negative effects.

In 2003, researchers from the Netherlands, Matthijs Schilder and Joanne van der Borg, assessed the short and long term behavioral effects of dog training with the help of shock collars. They wanted to know three things:

1. Do shock collars cause pain and fear or just cessation of a behavior? This could be evaluated by looking for signs of fear and pain when dogs receive a shock.
2. If the shock collars cause pain and fear, do the signs of fear fade afterwards such that the dog is completely normal or do signs of fear and anxiety persist? For instance, if dogs have received shock on the training ground do they show more signs of fear during non-training times in the same area when compared to dogs that have not been shocked?
3. And lastly, the researchers wondered if they could distinguish shocked from non-shocked dogs by fear/anxiety responses outside the training grounds. That is, are dogs who have been shocked more fearful in non-training locations? If so, it indicates they associate the handler or being given commands with the reception of shocks.

The Study Group

Schilder and van der Borg used Malinois, Malinois crosses, German Shepherds and one Rottweiler from a group of dogs being trained for their official (IPO) certificate as police dogs as well as dogs being trained for standard watchdog training for a comparable (VH3) certificate, which is the highest possible in this type of training.

Because these were working dogs they differ from the general population of dogs in that they are higher energy, higher drive, and have a higher tolerance for the correction-based training for which they are bred.

The 32 shock-collar group dogs (S-dogs) received shocks during training. The control group received no shocks but did receive other harsh methods including choke chain corrections, pinch collar corrections, other physical corrections (C-dogs). The researchers had no influence upon the methods and aids used, rather they just observed the trainers during the routine training sessions and “free walking” sessions in which the dog was not being trained or given corrections.

Overall they observed 32 shock collar-group dogs receiving 107 shocks and 16 control dogs who received other types of corrections instead. They evaluated control and experimental dogs in three situations:

1. First a free walk on the training grounds in which the dog was walked on leash but no orders were given to the dog. This was to see if there was a behavioral difference between the non-shocked vs the shock collar dogs and whether the type of correction had a lasting effect outside of the correction-situation.
2. An obedience work session on the training ground which included the following commands—sit and down in motion, heeling in slow, normal and fast walking speed with changes of direction, and recall to the handler. This situation was to determine whether the S-dogs showed signs of fear or pain when corrected.
3. A protection work session on the training ground in which the dog performed a number of exercises such as search for criminal, hold and bark at criminal, escape and defense, followed by attack by the criminal, and finally transport back.
4. They also filmed the dogs during a “free-walk” session at a park (a new location) and then an obedience session at the park. This was to see

whether there was a difference between control dogs and S-dogs and whether S-dog associated the shock correction with the handler.

The Effects of Shock-Collar Corrections on Body Posture

The study found that in the 32 dogs that received a total of 107 shocks, there was an immediate direct effect in which the dogs most commonly:

- Lowered their of body posture (22 of 32 dogs)
- Gave high-pitched yelps (17 of 32 dogs)
- Gave tongue flicks (18 of 32 dogs)
- Lowered their tail (13 of 32 dogs)
- Squealed (13 of 32 dogs)
- Turned their head down and to the side to avoid the shock (7 of 32 dogs)
- Moved away (avoidance) (14 of 32 dogs)
- Gave a barking scream (5 of 32 dogs)
- Crouched (6 of 32 dogs)

Dogs also lifted their front paw, lowered their back, jumped, licked their lips, circled, trembled, and sniffed the ground. All of the listed behavioral responses are signs of fear, pain, or anxiety and stress. Seven dogs showed no reaction.

The Effects of Previous Shock-Collar Corrections on Behavior at the Training Ground

Dogs that had been shocked previously showed more signs of anxiety and fear than the control dogs during free-walking on the training grounds as well as when they were being trained. During the free-walking and obedience work, S-dogs exhibited significantly more lip licking and lower ear positions indicating lasting effects of shock on overall fear and anxiety. During the protection work they showed more paw-raising.

The Effects of Previous Shock-Collar Corrections on Behavior in a New Setting (The Park)

Dogs that had been shocked previously showed more signs of fear and anxiety in the park situation than the control dogs. They showed a higher frequency of low ear position during the free walk than the control dogs and lower ear position and tongue flicking during obedience exercises in the park.

Behavior on the Training Ground Vs the Park and When Being Trained Vs on Free Walk.

Dogs that had previously been shocked were more frightened on the training ground than in the park. They carried their tails lower on the training ground than in the park and lifted their paw more. They were also more frightened during training than when being walked—ears and tail position were lower when being trained. However, non-shocked dogs also showed more signs of fear when being trained than when being walked.

The Take Home Messages

Overall the researchers concluded that even when compared to working dogs trained using choke chain and pinch collar corrections, dogs trained with electronic shock collars showed more fear and anxiety behaviors than those trained by other traditional police dog and watchdog methods. They concluded that:

- Avoidance behavior and fear postures during the shocks indicated that the shock elicited both pain and fear and, therefore, were not just a distraction or nuisance.
- The fact that the dogs showed more fear than control dogs both in the non-training situations in the familiar training grounds as well as in the park indicates that dogs are learning to associate the shock, not just with the unwanted behavior, but also with the location/environment as well as the trainer. The researchers found some evidence that some dogs had also learned to associate commands with shock. For example they state that one dog, shocked immediately after getting a “heel” command, yelped after getting the next “heel” command without being shocked. The authors point out that the dog was not given a chance to respond after given the “heel” command. Rather, the command was immediately followed by the correction, hence, increasing the likelihood that this type of aversion association would be made.
- The researchers state that in the presence of the handler, the dog has learned to expect something aversive. “The enormous rewards the dogs experience during training, i.e., chasing down, catching a criminal and winning the sleeve, do not counter the negative effects of getting shocked. This is in spite of the fact that handlers of non-shocked dogs admitted that they use prong collars and that their dogs experienced beatings and other harsh punishment, such as kicks or choke collar corrections.”
- Both dogs trained using electronic shock collars and those trained with other traditional coercive methods (choke chain, pinch collar, physical

punishment) showed more signs of fear and anxiety when being trained than when on a free walk.

Interestingly, the results did show that 7 dogs out of 32 (22%) showed no signs of fear or pain while actually receiving the electronic collar shock which indicates that some dogs bred for high drive and to withstand the demands of the coercive-type training appear to have no pain or fear of the shock. The study does not indicate whether these 7 dogs failed to show fear and anxiety in the other test situations though.

Article from American veterinarian, written by Kerry Lengyel

But the No. 1 defense mentioned in the study is the fact that dog welfare is put at higher risk when electronic collars are used. Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Slovenia, Scotland, Sweden, Wales, and some parts of Australia all currently have a ban on electronic collars for dogs. Animal activists have been attempting to issue a Europe-wide ban on their sale and use, while no movement on a ban has been created in the United States.

But according to a new study published “there is no credible scientific evidence to justify electronic collar use and the use of spray collars or electronic fences for dogs.”

The study considers 3 types of electronic collars: anti-bark collars that give a shock when the dog barks, electronic boundary fences that give a shock when the dog crosses the boundary, and remote-controlled collars that give a shock at the will of the pet owner.

Through an online questionnaire, 1251 dog owners from France—a country without any regulations on the use of electronic collars—responded. Of those, 26% reported

that they did use 1 of the 3 types of electronic collars.

According to the questionnaire results, anti-bark collars appeared to be the least efficient and the most injurious device. Remote-controlled collars also appeared to be used mainly for pet owner convenience.

The responses outlined the reasons why pet owners may use these electronic collars, including wanting fast results, they tried it on themselves and it didn't hurt much, they think the risks are lower in the long-term than other alternatives, and that they are cheaper than hiring a dog trainer or behaviorist.

As a rebuttal, the study's authors provided scientific evidence to counter each of these reasons. For example: Human skin and dog skin are vastly different, which can cause the shock to feel much more intense to a dog.

Studies show that using shock may result in increased fear, aggression, or learned helplessness.

People who use shock collars may end up paying even more money on a dog trainer or behaviorist if using the collar affects the human-animal relationship or the welfare of the dog.

One study showed a higher risk of escape associated with electronic fences compared to physical fences.

Article written by Dr Sheridan Lathe (Vet Tails):

As vets we see the *worst of everything*... we see the cat that got a collar caught in a cat flap and strangled, the dog that ate a bone and ruptured their stomach or the bird that's leg ring crushed their leg. Although these scenarios are often the exception to the rule, they still shape our opinions of different things. I for example have never

and would never give my dog a bone, simply because I have removed bones from COUNTLESS dog bellies.

So saying all that, I have seen damage caused by the incorrect use of 'electric collars' (RTC/ecollar/shock collar) as have many other vets (do a quick google search for more reported images). As a veterinarian I have also consulted on numerous behaviour cases, and take a positive reinforcement approach (all Australian veterinarians study animal behaviour as they are the only legal source of behaviour modification medication). It is not just what I have seen in the clinic that shapes my view on these collars but also recommendations, guidelines and research I have read.

For example the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) has a very clear statement on the use of 'electric collars'; and they are illegal in three states of Australia. The AVA guidelines help shape the views of Aussie veterinarians, but also help govern us, so this is one reason I do not recommend the use of these collars to my patients/clients.

There have been many studies on the use of 'electric collars' for dog training and they have varied results. I have included links below but the main thing I get from these studies are: The electric shock causes fear, and sometimes pain, which is demonstrated by the dog through yelping, cowering, ears lowered and submissive postures; Electric collars can lead to a negative association with owners or other subjects; One study showed that when used CORRECTLY the collars do not increase cortisol levels (stress hormone)- key word being CORRECTLY which means the timing must be perfect, which it often isn't unless owners have had intensive training and the study showed used INCORRECTLY they do increase stress; and finally that a decrease in a negative behavior does not mean the underlying problem has been addressed and may actually lead to an increased level of anxiety for the dog.

Another huge concern I have is that when you google 'canine shock collar' the first statement is that the collars can be bought for \$25-200 and that they are a cheaper

alternative to a trainer... the lack of regulation is what concerns me most and I think these collars should only be available through behaviourists or veterinarians to ensure quality and prevent fear, pain and injury. Veterinary behaviour specialists, dog trainers and dog behaviourists may have a slightly higher price range than a collar but a much better outcome!

So all in all I would not recommend the use of an 'electric collar' to my clients. I do believe that 'electric collars' when used correctly can reduce problem behaviours, but I still do not believe they need to be used in most circumstances. I also am a very strong believer that positive reinforcement is the training method of choice for pets and with the advances in research into animal welfare, canine cognition and animal training methods we need to grow, learn and adapt to new methods.

Vets on Behavior Proclaim, Never Use Shock Collar

By Steve Dale

Orlando, FL. Never, under any circumstances, choose a dog trainer who uses an electronic collar (shock collar). "You wouldn't send your kid off to a school where they use shock," says veterinary behaviorist Dr. Karen Overall. "So, why would you send your dog there?"

After falling out of favor, the electronic collars are making a comeback. "We're so concerned about keeping sharp knives or anything that may be poisonous away from our pets because we love them so much; yet, it's acceptable to give our best friends a jolt," says Dr. Kersti Seksel, who is a board certified veterinary behaviorist in both Australia and in the United States. "It's appalling!"

Overall and Seksel led a group of 23 veterinarians participating in the North American Veterinary Conference Post Graduate Institute in Advanced Clinical Behavioral Medicine, May 23 through 29, in Orlando, FL. In addition to providing accelerated advanced education, the Institute offered a rare opportunity to set a standard for the profession. The attending vets in the behavioral medicine group (including a vet from Spain, three vets from Australia, and three from Canada) created a document with a list of recommendations for choosing a dog trainer.

The document is based on science, and supports trainers who use praise and reward rather than punishment. Seksel, who is from Seaforth, Australia says in most places in Australia, these collars are actually considered illegal. “That’s how bad they are,” she says. “In general, trainers who tend to rely on choke and yank training or electronic collars tend to be punitive in their methods. They punish the dogs for what they don’t do, rather than rewarding the dogs for doing something right.”

Overall, a researcher in the psychiatry department at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA, agrees, “I’ve seen so many animals damaged by shock. And I’ve seen people devastated when they realize that the dog who they love has been made a nervous wreck or aggressive because they’ve chosen the wrong training method.”

The veterinarians who crafted the recommendations also urged avoiding trainers who use chain link choke collars (also called training or correction collars) and prong collars (also called pinch collars, blunt metal prongs are fitted around the dogs’ neck). Flex or retractable leashes are not suggested as training tools to be used in training classes.

Overall adds, “For example, we know how dogs learn best, and this equipment may actually discourage learning, not to mention potentially hurt the dog. Dogs that are chronically yanked and popped may have recurring laryngeal nerve paralysis and other physical injuries as a result, not to mention seriously damaged psyches.”

Dr. Tamera Cole of Ft. Wayne, IN was among the group of vets who created the recommendations for choosing a dog trainer. She says she realizes many trainers around the world use inappropriate equipment, but that doesn't make it right. "We're reaching for an ideal here, and it's all based on what we know about training dogs."

The tools veterinarians do recommend for trainers include using treats (to motivate), head halters (they're kind of like horse halters for dogs, and include the brand names Halti and Gentle Leader), full body harnesses, flat buckle collars (the kind you affix your dog's ID tags to), and of course, praise. Clickers are generally acceptable, depending on the owners' ability to "click train."

The suggestions crafted by the veterinarians at the Institute indicate vets need to personally check out trainers before making a referral, and also encourage clients to audit training class before they sign up so you can observe the trainers in action. "The dogs and their people (in the classes) should look happy," Overall says.

Ideally, puppies should begin their first class early enough to finish by the time they're 16-weeks old. While this recommendation isn't always "or will often ever be practical – the vets who have a special interest in behavior offer indisputable scientific evidence that early positive socialization is as advantageous for puppies as kindergarten is for children. In fact, these classes are typically dubbed puppy kindergarten.

"Appropriate early training and socialization enhances the bond you have with your dog and teaches the dog good manners," says Institute participant Dr. Randi Olson of Valparaiso, IN. "The goal is also to avoid behavior problems from developing later. When serious behavior problems occur, there's a real life potential for those dogs to wind up being given up to a shelter."

Other recommendations from the Institute list include dogs in juvenile class, defined as canines who are from about four months old to 6 months old shouldn't

necessarily be mixed with puppy kindergarten students (those that ideally graduate by their 16th-week) or dogs partaking in adult classes.

Trainers should have a curriculum which clients can review in advance, offering reasonable and age appropriate expectations for their canine students. Puppy classes should be held indoors. No matter where the classes are held, check out the safety of the dogs. For example, whenever anywhere near traffic, dogs should be on a leash. Proof of appropriate vaccinations should be a requirement to protect all the dogs in the class.

When choosing a dog trainer, consider first and foremost a trainer recommended by a veterinarian. However, be sure to ask if the recommending vet has personally seen the trainer's classes. Also consider the trainer's experience, references from friends and neighbors, and membership to the Association of Pet Dog Trainers.

Finally, when trainers are in over their heads, they should accept it and refer those difficult cases to certified applied animal behaviorists, veterinary behaviorists or veterinarians with an interest in behavior.

"Our goal by making these recommendations is to raise the bar, for both the benefit of dogs and their people" Cole says.

article by Steve Dale... <https://goodnewsforpets.com/vets-on-behavior-proclaim-never-use-shock-collar/>

Shock Collar Facts

1. Shocking is not a dependable way to establish or end behaviors. Research indicates that unwanted behaviors return when the collar is removed, because the conditioning must be paired with the shock stimulus. (Polsky, R. H. (1994); M.E.P, Maier, S.F, Geer, J.H. (1968))

2. When using it for punishment, the pain must be severe for it to have an effect on behavior. Karolina Westlund, Ph.D.: “Animals habituate to low-level aversives – these don’t work or stop working over time... if behaviour doesn’t change, exposing the animal to aversives constitutes abuse.”

3. Dogs can associate the shocks with things in their environment. They can develop a negative association with the person who delivers the shocks and things in their environment, including other dogs, people, certain areas, objects, etc. (Polsky, R. H (1994). The association of pain with these things causes fear and shocked dogs may feel the need to defend themselves or escape. (Sophia Yin, DVM, MS, “Are Shock Collars Painful or Just Annoying to Dogs?”)

4. Pain and punishment can exacerbate or cause aggression. This change can happen over time or the dog may just snap, after a buildup of stress. Karolina Westlund, Ph.D.: “Aversive stimuli may cause frustration and aggressive behavior.”

5. Shocked dogs may show learned helplessness. “...dogs which experienced inescapable electric shock demonstrated significant motivational, learning, and emotional deficits and failed to initiate behaviors to terminate the shock.” (Richard Hoffman, Mustafa Al'Absi, in Comprehensive Clinical Psychology, 1998.)

6. Risk of faulty equipment. A malfunctioning or misused shock collar can cause electrical burns (Dr. Sheridan Lathe, “The Use of Electric Collars From the Vet's and Dog Trainer's Perspective”) and lasting psychological trauma.

7. Stress levels are raised. Dogs learn that the shocks may come at any time, so they have elevated cortisol levels which interfere with sleep and health. Stress has adverse effects on health, quality and length of life (Stanley Coren, PhD., DSc, FRSC). The startle response provoked by an e-collar puts dogs on high-alert and can cause skittish and fearful behaviors. Increased stress can also cause new unwanted behaviors. Studies show that the stress response to shock actually impedes their ability to learn. (Walker, R, Fisher, J, Veville, P. (1997); Mendl, M, (1999); Hiby, E.F, Rooney, N.J, Bradshaw, J.W.S. (2004))

8. Shocking hurts more than you think. Merck Veterinary Manual: “Canine skin is thinner and much more sensitive than human skin.”

9. Teaching with shock and punishment is less effective than positive, force-free methods. (Cooper JJ, Cracknell N, Hardiman J, Wright H, Mills D (2014) The Welfare Consequences and Efficacy of Training Pet Dogs with Remote Electronic Training Collars in Comparison to Reward Based Training). Punishing the dog doesn't tell the dog what to do. Clear and kind communication teaches them good behavior and has long-lasting positive effects on their welfare.

10. Shocking damages the human-animal bond. Using a shock collar can decrease the dog's trust in their pet parent. Dogs depend on us for everything, and their impression of their pet parent's ability to take care of them largely determines their behavior. Shock collars are banned in the following places: Wales, Scotland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, Slovenia, Germany, New South Wales, Southern Australia and (soon) England. There are movements to ban them in Ireland, the United States, Canada and other countries. What the experts say: “To use shock as an effective dog training method you will need: A thorough understanding of canine behaviour. A thorough understanding of learning theory. Impeccable timing. And if you have those three things, you don't need a shock collar.” -Dr. Ian Dunbar, DVM “There are now terrific scientific and research data that show the harm that shock collars can do behaviorally... There is no longer a reason for people to remain misinformed. Let me make my opinion perfectly clear: Shock is not training - in the vast majority of cases it meets the criteria for abuse... In all situations where shock has been used there is some damage done, even if we cannot easily see it. No pet owner needs to use this technique to achieve their goal. Dogs who cease to exhibit a problem behavior usually also cease to exhibit normal behaviors.” -Karen L. Overall, MA, VMD, PhD, DACVB, CAAB, Author of Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats “They present a substantial and unreasonable risk of illness or injury.” -FDA, April 2014 Meeting, Electrical Stimulation Devices for Aversive Control Additional Resources: • Beerda, B., Schilder, M., van Hooff, J., de Vries, H., & Mola, J. (1998, July). Behavioral, saliva

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Impact on the dogs welfare... <https://positively.com/files/The-Use-of-Shock-Collars-and-Their-Impact-on-the-Welfare-of-Dogs.pdf>