



FLORIDA VETERINARY BEHAVIOR SERVICE

Lisa Radosta DVM, DACVB

Ariel Fagen DVM

Krista Sirois DVM

Amy Learn VMD

P: 561-795-9398 F: 561-795-8537

www.flvetbehavior.com info@flvetbehavior.com

Martin

Animal Eye Specialty Clinic
2239 S. Kanner Hwy
Stuart

Palm Beach

Animal Eye Specialty Clinic
3421 Forest Hill Blvd
West Palm Beach

Broward

Coral Springs Animal Hospital
2160 N University Drive
Coral Springs

Miami-Dade

Animal Eye Specialty Clinic
20290 NW 2nd Ave
Miami

Shock Collar Use in Dog Training

Shock collars, also known as electronic collars or e-collars, are commonly used in dog training today. This is a positive punishment technique, meaning that something is added (the shock) to reduce a behavior (barking for example). The shock is often preceded by a noise such as a beep that tells the dog that the shock is about to occur. Some shock collars are remote operated, while others (such as with underground fences) automatically sound when the dog reaches a certain distance away from the modem.

Research shows us that dogs who are trained using shock collars not only display more stress behaviors than dogs trained in other ways, but they also release more cortisol, the stress hormone, and are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors than dogs trained in other ways. Thus, dogs who are exhibiting behaviors due to an emotional disorder based in fear, anxiety or stress are actually at greater risk of the disorder progressing if shock collars are used. Florida Veterinary Behavior Service does not recommend the use of shock collars when working with any animal.

Common Misconceptions Surrounding Shock Collars

- *The shock does not hurt the dog.*
 - The shock hurts or else the electronic collar would not work, plain and simple. If the shock did not elicit pain from the dog, it would not be punishing, and the behavior would not decrease.
- *Once the dog understands the collar, you can just use the beep, which is harmless.*

- While it is true that dogs who are trained using shock collars learn to respect the beep, studies show us that the beeping sound still produces a stress response in the dog. Thus, even the collar set only to beep can make emotional disorders worse.
- *Shock collars help the dog become more obedient.*
 - When shock collars are used, the dog's emotional state is not taken into consideration; when you add physical harm to stress, anxiety or fear, you see an increase in those things. An obedient dog can still be a dog who is stressed and fearful. Also of note is that even if a dog's behavior does not stem from a fearful or anxious place, shock collars are still proven to cause these emotions in dogs.
- *Underground fences are an alternative to real fencing.*
 - When dogs are sufficiently motivated to leave the property, they will do so whether the shock is present or not. Many times, dogs will choose to leave the property to access some exciting stimuli (to chase a cat for example), but once they are off-property, do not want to re-enter for risk of being shocked. Shock collars are not an effective way to keep any dog on property, especially one that has shown aggression to other animals or people.
- *Some dogs are so hardheaded, only shock collars are effective.*
 - There is more behavioral research available on dogs today than ever before. There are many, many safe and effective methods for training dogs that do not involve the use of shock. Dog trainers who actively research and understand obedience training and behavior modification do not need to rely on shock collars to teach behaviors. If your trainer has recommended a shock collar for your dog, it is time to find a new trainer.
- *Shock collars are a last resort for an aggressive dog.*
 - Unfortunately, this could not be more wrong. Studies show that shock collars can cause dogs who were previously unaggressive to become

aggressive. Shock collars should never be used on a dog that has already shown aggressive behaviors, including growling, barking, and/or biting.

References:

Polsky, R. 2000, Can aggression in dogs be elicited through the use of electronic pet content systems? *J. Appl. Anim. Wel. Sic.* 3, 345-358

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. *PLoS ONE* 9(9): e102722. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0102722

Schilder M. B. H., van der Borg, J. A. M., 2004. Training dogs with help of the shock collar: short and long term behavioral effects. *Appl. Anim. Behave. Sic.* 85, 319-334