



International Positive Dog Training Association Research Findings – Tools Flat Non-Slip Buckle Collar

Tool: Flat, Non-Slip Buckle Collar

Rating: Acceptable when fitted properly and used for safety and identification only. Not acceptable to use as a correction device.



Operant Sequence

The intended use of the flat, non-slip collar does not include an operant sequence as its purpose is for safety only, when attached to a leash or life-line and/or to hold identification. When used as a correction collar it works with the following quadrants of operant conditioning.

Positive Punishment

- Adding a pop-release correction to decrease the likelihood that the behaviour will be repeated.

For example, adding a pop-release correction with the leash to stop the dog from pulling.

Negative Reinforcement

- Stopping the pop-release corrections to increase the likelihood that the behaviour will be repeated.

For example, ending the pop-release correction to keep the dog in heel position (avoidance conditioning).



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Use of Tool:

A safety device and/or to hold identification sometimes used as an aversive.

Proper Application

As a safety and identification device, proper application only includes a proper fit, positioning and securing the collar around the dog's neck. A proper fit includes enough space between the dog's neck and the collar to be able to insert at least two fingers, but not loose enough to allow escape if the dog were to attempt to back out of it or to increase the risk of snagging.

As a correction tool, proper use of the flat, non-slip collar involves holding the leash in your right hand with the dog in heel position on your left. The correction is made with a quick snap-release movement across your body away from the dog, without the use of constriction.

Note: The following refers to the use of the flat, non-slip collar as a correction or restraint device. IPDTA does not condone such use.

Parameters

- Timing of the correction must be exact for the dog to realize which behaviour will predict the correction and which behaviour will prevent it.
- The severity of the correction must match the dog's level of sensitivity.
- The dog must be taught the desired behaviour before being corrected for the undesirable behaviour.

Benefits

- The dog is not likely to back out of the collar if it is fitted properly.
- Since the collar does not constrict there is a much lower risk for abuse.



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- This is the most comfortable collar for a dog to wear.

Drawbacks, Risks and Warnings

Physical

- If the collar is pulled for an extended period of time it can cause coughing, gagging, vomiting, discomfort and/or pain.
- If the collar is used to hang the dog for any length of time it can cause coughing, gagging, vomiting, discomfort, pain and/or death.
- Too severe a correction can cause injury to the trachea or cause the trachea to collapse.
- Too severe or an improper extended correction can cause discomfort, coughing, gagging, vomiting, pain, injury to the muscles of the dog's neck, spinal injury, blindness, brain damage, and even death. For example, when a dog becomes trapped and attempts escape. Proper fit reduces this risk.
- If the collar is left on when a dog is unsupervised it can become snagged causing the dog to cough, gag, vomit, with the possibility of causing pain, injury, skin de-gloving, strangulation and/or death.
- The higher the collar is on the dog's neck, the higher the risk to the dog.
- Since a proper correction requires good timing and reflexes, coordination, awareness and sensitivity, there is a risk for abusive application.
- Some collars have been known to cause irritation, wounds and infection and therefore the material the collar is made from is a factor.
- If the collar is not adjusted as a dog grows the collar will become embedded in the dog's neck, becoming tighter and tighter causing irritation, wounds, discomfort, pain, strangulation or even death.



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- If the collar is fitted too loosely and left on while two dogs are playing together, a dog's jaw can become caught in the other dog's collar causing injury to one or both dogs.
- If the dog hits the end of the leash, "life-line" or retractable leash with any force, it can cause injury.
- If positioned too close to the ears, the correction can affect the sensitive nerve bundles that exit just below the dog's ears.
- If the flat, non-slip collar is not fitted properly the dog could back out of it and escape.

Behavioural

- Improper use of flat, non-slip collars have been known to cause fear, submissive aggression, stress, depression and avoidance behaviours.
- Even proper use on fearful dogs can cause fear, submissive aggression, stress, depression and avoidance behaviours. In situations such as this a systematic desensitization program is required to desensitize the dog to the collar.
- Improper use of this collar is seldom effective in changing unwanted behaviour.
- The anxiety caused by improper use or severe corrections can increase aggressive behaviour, the severity and frequency of aggressive episodes.

Psychological

- Unwanted associations may be created if the dog pairs up the unpleasant experience of the correction with someone or something in the environment at the moment it is corrected. For example, if the dog is focused on a child when corrected, it may create an unpleasant association with children. This association can cause fear of children which could lead to fear aggression.



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- The unpleasant experience can create fear and distrust of the handler.
- The unpleasant experience can also create fear and distrust of anyone or anything in the environment.
- In order to effectively stop an unwanted behaviour with as few corrections as possible, the dog's temperament and level of sensitivity must be known. Since there is no way to know how sensitive the dog is to the physical correction without correcting it, the risk of making a mistake is high. If you start too high and work your way down you can create fear and/or aggression, if you start too low and work your way up you can desensitize the dog to the correction and/or cause habituation; which is the ability to stop reacting to meaningless stimuli through repeat exposure. ^{R2} When this occurs you will require higher and higher levels of correction to stop the unwanted behaviour. Therefore, finding the correct intensity of correction risks causing pain, physical harm, damaging the dog's temperament and/or creating new behavioural problems.
- The unpleasant experience can cause stress, anxiety, and/or depression, leading to other behavior issues and/or the inability to learn.

Limitations

- Excellent timing and reflexes, coordination, awareness and sensitivity are essential to proper application of a flat, non-slip collar correction.
- Since human behaviour is often affected by emotions, there is a risk of bad judgment and/or timing on part of the handler.
- The dog may not be able to feel the correction if there is too much hair between the collar and the skin.
- This tool can only be effective once the dog understands the desired response.
- The flat, non-slip collar is only effective if fitted and used properly.



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- If the collar is too tight it can cause non-stop pain and/or discomfort.

Note: When the flat, non-slip collar is fitted properly and used correctly, or used to hold identification the IPDTA finds it acceptable because it comes with minimal risk.

References

R1 -Professional Standards for Dog Trainers, Delta Society 2001, Page 19

R2 -"Habituation" - Excel-lerated Learning, Pamela J Reid Ph.D., James & Kenneth Publishers 1996 Page 37-38