



## International Positive Dog Training Association Research Findings – Tools Pinch (Prong) Collars

**Tool:** Pinch or Prong Collar

**Rating:** Unacceptable due to high risk for misuse and/or abuse in the hands of the average dog handler.



### Operant Sequence

#### Positive Punishment

- Adding the pinch to decrease the likelihood that the behaviour will be repeated.

For example, pulling on the pinch collar to stop the dog from pulling on leash.

#### Negative Reinforcement

- Stopping the pinch to increase the likelihood that the behaviour will be repeated.

For example, loosening up on the pinch to keep the dog in heel position (avoidance conditioning).



## **International Positive Dog Training Association**

### **Research Findings – Tools**

### **Pinch (Prong) Collars**

#### **Use of Tool**

Powerful Aversive

#### **Proper Application**

The pinch collar is opened by removing one link then wrapped around the dog's neck. It is then fastened by replacing the missing link. The collar should fit with the prongs facing the neck, snug enough for the prongs to lightly touch but not push into the skin. When the leash is pulled or tightens, the prongs push against the skin and muscles of the neck causing physical discomfort or pain. Unlike the choke chain and slip collar, the pinch collar has limited constriction. It takes minimal effort to create a powerful correction.

#### **Parameters**

- Timing of the correction must be exact for the dog to realize which behaviour will predict the correction.
- 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**

- Has limited constriction.
- Takes little effort for handlers with limited strength.
- Distributes even pressure around the neck.
- Takes less skill to use than some other collars.



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### **Drawbacks, Risks and Warnings**

#### Physical

- The metal prongs allow a high potential for causing pain and/or physical injury.
- Has been known to cause irritation, wounds and infection.



- If the collar is left on the dog when not supervised, the dog can become caught by the collar and can injure itself; or cause degloving of the skin on the neck and head; cause strangulation and even death.
- If two dogs are playing together the dog's jaw can become caught in the prong 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 or even death.
- If positioned too close to the ears, the correction will affect the sensitive nerve-bundles just below the dog's ears.



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#### Behavioural

- Pinch collars have been known to cause fear, submission, aggression, stress, depression and avoidance behaviours.
- The stress, anxiety and fear caused by the correction 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 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.
- The unpleasant experience can create fear and distrust of the handler.
- The unpleasant experience can 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. Because 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. <sup>R1</sup> When this occurs you will require higher and higher levels of correction to stop the unwanted behaviour. Therefore, finding the correct intensity of pinch risks causing pain, physical harm, damaging the dog's temperament and/or creating new behaviour problems.



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- The unpleasant experience can cause stress, anxiety, and/or depression, leading to other behavior issues and/or the inability to learn.

#### **Limitations**

- Goals must be achieved with as few corrections as possible.
- Excellent timing is essential for the dog to associate the correction with the unwanted behaviour.
- Since it takes very little strength to deliver a severe correction, the risk for misuse and abuse is high.
- Because 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 prongs and the skin.
- This tool can only be effective once the dog understands the desired response.
- Links have been known to come loose resulting in an escaped dog.
- Putting the prong collar on the dog requires strength and good vision.
- If the prong collar is too loose, contact will be concentrated on one particular area which can result in too much pressure to one spot on the dog's neck.
- If the prong collar is too tight it can cause non-stop pain and/or discomfort.



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- The pinch collar can only be used during supervised training.
- The size of the links must be appropriate to the size of the dog.

### **References**

R1 - "Habituation" - Excel-lerated Learning, Pamela J Reid Ph.D., James & Kenneth Publishers 1996 Page 37-38