



IPDTA – International Positive Dog Training

SHOCK COLLARS

Science has proven that dogs have thoughts and emotions and that an adult dog has the mental and emotional capacity of a 2 ½ to 3-year-old child. Do you think that it's acceptable to use a shock collar on a toddler? Then why would it be acceptable to use one on a dog?

Before making any decisions please try one on yourself and ask yourself how you would feel if you were repeatedly shocked and were helpless to stop it? All you have to do is Google shock collar injuries to view horrific pictures that prove what dogs have had to endure. A good rule of thumb is this: If you don't want someone doing something to you, then don't do it to anyone else, animal or human!

The great news is that there are effective alternatives for changing all unwanted canine behaviour that does not involve intimidation, fear or pain.

Dog training is about teaching a dog to understand and respond to cues and signals and to make correct choices. It has been scientifically proven that shock collars cause fear, stress and anxiety and that these unpleasant emotions inhibit ones ability to think, learn, remember, problem-solve or make choices. Because of this it is clear that shocking a dog is counter-productive to the learning process. It does not teach the dog what you want it to do and is not an acceptable teaching or training tool. Shock equipment is simply a dog-training cop-out that compromises a dog's physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing and greatly impacts its quality of life in a negative way.

If you're using shock equipment then you either lack compassion for your dog or you've simply failed to educate yourself. There is no behaviour that cannot be changed using positive methods.

The International Positive Dog Training Association (www.IPDTA.org) conducted an in-depth study of shock equipment and here are the results.

Tool: Shock Collar Products

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

Operant Sequence:

Positive Punishment: Intentionally causing static shock to decrease the likelihood that a behaviour will be repeated. For example, shocking a dog to stop it from barking.



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Negative Reinforcement: Ending the shock to increase the likelihood that the behaviour will be repeated. For example, ending the shock to convince a dog to stay in heel position.

(Avoidance Conditioning)

Use of Tool: Powerful Aversive

Drawbacks, Risks and Warnings

Physical

- The electric shock causes an unpleasant or painful sensation with a high potential for causing physical, psychological and/or emotional harm.
- Even low levels of shock have been known to cause irritation, infections and burns.
- With invisible fence systems, a dog may be injured by animals or people crossing the boundary and entering the dog's territory rendering the dog cornered.
- Because the shock itself is an electrical charge it can affect the central nervous system of a dog.
- Dogs prone to heart problems could experience complications due to the electrical charge.
- With invisible fence system, dogs that escape the territory are unlikely to return due to fear of being shocked again and are in danger of being hit by cars and other environmental dangers.
- Since dogs have a higher level of saline in their systems than humans, the effects of shock will be more severe on a dog than that felt by a human.

Behavioural

- Shock equipment has been known to cause fear, submission, aggression, stress, depression and avoidance behaviours in dogs.
- A study of the behavioural effects of shock equipment on dogs resulted in the dogs lowering their ear and tail positions, high pitched yelps, flicking their tongues, squealing, avoidance behaviour, urination, defecation and redirected aggression. These responses prove that shocks are painful because these behaviours are associated with fear, stress and pain in dogs.
- The anxiety caused by the shock can cause or increase aggressive behaviour and the severity and frequency of aggressive episodes.



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Psychological

- With an invisible fence system a dog may be traumatized by animals or people crossing the boundary and entering the dog's territory.
- The unpleasant experience can create an unpleasant association that results in fear and distrust of the handler.
- The unpleasant experience can create an unpleasant association that results in fear and distrust of anyone or anything in the environment that the dog is focused on when experiencing the shock. For example, if a dog is focused on a child when shocked it can create an unpleasant association with children. This association can cause fear of children, which can lead to fear aggression and dog bites to children.
In one case a dog was playing with a doggy friend that lived next door when they moved too close to the invisible fence. When the dog wearing the collar was shocked it attacked the other dog. From that day forward the dog that was shocked would fly into a rage every time it saw the other dog. They never played together again.
- The unpleasant experience can cause stress, anxiety, fear and/or depression, leading to other behaviour and/or health issues, the inability to learn and/or a compromised quality of life.

Mechanical

- Shock equipment has been known to malfunction and remain stuck in shock mode.
- Shock equipment has been known to malfunction delivering high voltage shocks.
- Shock equipment has been known to be triggered by electrical signals such as; ham radios, radio transmitters, televisions, cell phones, microwaves, power surges, other remote products and by sounds such as barking dogs, vibrations, the dogs own ID tags among other noises.
- Power surges can cause the collar to malfunction resulting in a severe shock.
- Dogs wearing shock equipment during a thunderstorm can be electrocuted if lightning hits the wet ground.
- Inconsistent current may occur from low batteries.
- Some collars have only one setting for duration of shock.
- Inexpensive collars are more likely to malfunction and not activate consistently, and may deliver inconsistent shock intensity
- Some collars have an inbuilt ability to automatically increase the shock level if the dog continues to bark. This in itself is abusive.
- Different brands of collar may not have consistent shock intensity and this can lead to misuse and/or abuse when changing products.



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- Shock equipment is inexpensive and easy to access and therefore the risk of them ending up in the wrong hands is high.

Note: It is the united opinion of the IPDTA that anything that causes intimidation, stress, anxiety, fear or pain is not necessary or acceptable.

Note: As a research experiment, a shock collar designed for sensitive and small dogs was brought in to an IPDTA meeting. The collar was set at its lowest setting – one out of a possible ten. Each IPDTA member held the collar with both prongs against the palm of their hand while the trigger was pressed. All members yelled in surprise, claimed it was painful and all refused to be shocked a second time – and that was with the lowest shock delivered to the palm of the hand. No one was brave enough to put it against their neck – that in itself, should tell you shock collars are both dangerous and abusive.

References

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