



Teaching Pet Parents to Succeed

Kathrine Breeden
www.bekindtodogs.com
kathrine@bekindtodogs.com
480.272.8816

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 Vriesa, H., & Mola, J. (1998, July). *Behavioral, saliva cortisol, and heart rate responses to different types of stimuli in dogs. Applied Animal Behaviour Science* (58) 365–381.
- Overall, K.L. (2005). *An open letter from Dr. Karen Overall regarding the use of shock collars.*
- www.thebark.com/content/latest-shock-collar-research
- www.companionanimalpsychology.com/2013/06/the-end-for-shock-collars.html
- <http://eldri.ust.is/media/ljosmyndir/dyralif/Trainingdogswithshockcollar.pdf>
- www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/448224/esc_evidence_paper_aug_2010_final.doc