

The Pet Professional Guild

Position Statement on the Use of Choke and Prong Collars

It is the position of the Pet Professional Guild that effective animal training procedures lay the foundation for an animal's healthy socialization and training and helps prevent behavior problems. The general pet-owning public should be educated by organizations and associations to ensure pet animals live in nurturing and stable environments to better prevent behavior problems and help ensure the overall well-being of the animal. Consistent with this effort, it is the position of the Pet Professional Guild (PPG) that the use of collars and leads that are intended to apply constriction, pressure, pain or force around a dog's neck (such as choke chains and prong collars) should be avoided.

Though data demonstrating the exact damage that can be potentially caused by using choke and prong collars is incomplete, experience has shown that soft tissue injuries are common and, as is the case with any harsh training method, the damage to the animal-human relationship results. Studies and the experience of the PPG's membership finds that training and behavior problems are consistently and effectively solved without the use of choke or prong collars with the alternative methods reinforcing the animal-human bond. Evidence indicates that rather than speeding the learning process, harsh training methods actually slow the training process, add to the animal's stress and can result in both short-term



and long-term psychological damage to animals.

Common problems which can result from the use of choke and prong collars:

Physical problems

While precise information on the potential damage caused by the use of choke and prong collars is still being collected, there are many cases of dogs suffering soft tissue damage, eye problems, strangulation (leading to death), tracheal/esophageal damage and neurological problems resulting from the use of choke/prong collars.

Training Fallout

Choke chains and prong collars are designed to administer negative reinforcement and positive punishment. Training techniques based in these two learning theory quadrants are prone to side effects. As an example, a dog wearing a choke or prong collar that fearfully barks and lunges at another dog would then be choked or pain inflicted by the prong collar. The pain and choking then adds to the negative association the dog wearing the collar has with other dogs. This is the polar opposite of what an ideal training protocol is designed to accomplish.



Even if a dog is free of reactivity issues, using a choke or prong is less than ideal. Today there are many effective alternatives available for training and management of skills where choke and prong collars have been traditionally used for teaching loose-leash-walking and formal/precision heel training.



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Conclusion

It is the position of the PPG that all training should be conducted in a manner that encourages animals to enjoy training and become more confident and well-adjusted pets. In addition, PPG members optimize the use of functional analysis to identify and resolve problem behaviors where choke and prong collars are typically used such as leash-pulling and lunging. All PPG members should encourage and use positive operant and respondent training methods, both personally and professionally. Further, the PPG and its members actively recommend against the use of choke and prong collars while actively promoting the use of flat buckle collars, head halters, harnesses and other types of control equipment that are safer for the animal.

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