

An Open Letter To Pet Retailers Concerning The Availability of Pet Training and Management Devices That Deliver Electric Shock.

In September 2017, the Pet Professional Guild (PPG) rolled out its Shock-Free Coalition, the key purpose of which is to build a strong and broad movement committed to eliminating electric shock devices from the worldwide supply and demand chain. It is our intent to fully realize the goal of shock tools and equipment being universally unavailable and no longer permitted in the training, management and care of pets anywhere. We plan to work diligently to achieve the following:

1. To engage and educate pet owners and shelter/rescue workers to help them make informed decisions about the management, care and training of the pets in their charge.
2. To build a worldwide coalition that provides pet owners access to competent, professional pet industry service providers.
3. To create widespread pet industry transparency and compliance regarding how professionals implement their services and communicate their philosophy to pet owners.

We ask that you partner with us and join us in this mission.

Why Is This Important?

PPG and the Shock-Free Coalition believe that pets have an intrinsic right to be treated humanely, to have each of their individual needs met, and to live in a safe, enriched environment free from force, pain and fear.

The use and application of electric shock provides no effective strategy for an animal to learn a new or

alternative behavior; it simply inflicts pain and risks making him fearful, anxious and/or aggressive. Generally speaking, a pet owner or trainer's main goals when shocking a pet are, firstly, to punish perceived misbehavior in the moment and, secondly, reduce future recurrences of the undesirable behavior. Shocking is a form of punishment and, as such, can only, achieve the first goal -- harshly. In the absence of a constructional approach whereby new and more appropriate behaviors are built, most punishment outside a laboratory environment (where all components can be systematically manipulated) is extremely unreliable and encased by unintended consequences.

There can be no doubt that electric shock is a punisher, and for punishment to be effective as a means to training a dog -- or any other animal -- there are three critical elements that must be fulfilled: consistency, timing and intensity. First, the punishment must occur every time the unwanted behavior occurs. Second, it must be administered within, at most, a second or two of the behavior. Third, it must be unpleasant enough to stop the behavior. To reiterate, in the real world outside science laboratories, meeting these three criteria is virtually impossible for a dog training professional, and most certainly for a dog owner. Citing a variety of studies, Ziv (2017) concludes that "even when experienced trainers operate [shock] collars, the welfare of the dogs could be compromised," and states it to be "likely that the threat to dogs' welfare would be even greater in the hands of unskilled dog owners, who might lack the timing and consistency needed for this type of training to be successful...due to the aversive nature of these devices and the likelihood of training ineffectiveness, their use can be abusive."

Veterinarians, behavior and training professionals worldwide are already dealing with the fallout

**SHOCK-FREE
COALITION**

Copyright The Pet Professional Guild

www.Shockfree.org

Decades of Research Lead The Way!

caused by the unrestrained use of shock collars for basic training and behavior concerns. Indeed, internationally-renowned veterinarian, certified applied veterinary behaviorist and author, Dr. Karen L. Overall MA, VMD, PhD, DACVB, CAAB (2013) states that *“the use of shock in the treatment of behavioral conditions is abusive, is doomed to fail, and will make situations less, not more, safe and reliable.”*

In the last two decades an enormous increase in canine research conducted by scientists and experts has provided us with a wealth of insight and understanding about how dogs think, learn and behave. Animals are conscious beings, and many species are known to demonstrate self-awareness and live rich emotional lives, just like us. As an international group of prominent scientists proclaimed in July 7, 2012 at the University of Cambridge, England’s first Francis Crick Memorial Conference: *“...the weight of evidence indicates that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness. Non-human animals, including all mammals and birds, and many other creatures, including octopuses, also possess these neurological substrates.”* (See *References for additional research resources*).

Our pets are wonderful, loyal companions and serve us on so many levels. Pet owners are more informed than ever before and tend to be more conscientious about their pet’s feelings and needs. The time has come. More and more people are making their buying decisions based on their ethics and values. This is not a passing fad. It is transforming our culture and how we treat animals. We can all be assured future generations will be even stronger in their resolve to treat animals with kindness. It is not only pet owners who need to shift their perceptions; in many cases it is the pet industry that is lagging behind and continuing

to rely on misleading reports and marketing studies, often conducted by the same companies that manufacture the aversive training equipment.

Meanwhile, dog trainers and behavior consultants who are still steeped in using punitive training methods commonly use outdated terms such as “dominance,” “pack leader,” and “alpha dog,” all of which have been proven by canine behavior scientists and specialists to be inappropriate and completely inaccurate in their application to pet dogs. In addition, many such trainers use training methods founded in aversive protocols now deemed obsolete and damaging – both physically and psychologically. (See *American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior position statements under Supporting Documents*).

An independent survey commissioned by the UK Kennel Club (2014) indicated almost three-quarters of the nation’s general public disapproves of shock collars and would support a blanket ban. Almost 80 percent believe negative training methods and devices are not needed at all. And yet manufacturers persist in making such devices and, sadly, pet stores persist in stocking them.

PPG believes that pet owners have the best intentions for their four-legged family members and that they do not aim to negatively impact their physical or mental well-being. However, in today’s fast-paced world where people are constantly busy, and reality television abounds with “quick fixes” to complex animal behavior problems that, in real life, can take weeks, months or even years to change, not all products will be appealing to all people. Nevertheless, those which have scientifically documented damaging consequences, both physical and psychological, for a living being need to be removed from the market place.

A key question, then, for pet retail outlets that provide training, tools and equipment to the pet owning community is: “Will you take a stance and

**SHOCK-FREE
COALITION**

Copyright The Pet Professional Guild

www.Shockfree.org

Advocate for Your Pets!

sign the Shock-Free Coalition Pledge?" Will you join us in helping to remove training tools and equipment that are designed to work using pain and fear as their key motivators?

PPG urges you to conduct your own thorough research given that so many fear-based training and behavior change tools and methods are marketed in slick terms to unsuspecting pet owners (Pet Professional Guild, 2016). On that basis, we ask that you stock and promote the incredibly vast array of harnesses, toys and other resources that are designed for the application of positive, humane dog training and pet care, in place of shock, prong and choke collars, and any other devices designed to cause fear and pain.

References

Low, P. (2012). The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness. Retrieved August 23, 2017 from

<http://fcmconference.org/img/CambridgeDeclarationOnConsciousness.pdf>

Overall, K.L. (2013). Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats. St. Louis, MO: Elsevier Saunders

The Kennel Club. (2014). Commissioned Electric Shock Collar Survey. Retrieved August 23, 2017 from

<http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/our-resources/kennel-club-campaigns/electric-shock-collars/>

Pet Professional Guild. (2016). Open Letter to veterinarians on referrals to training and behavior professionals. Retrieved August 22, 2017, from

<https://petprofessionalguild.com/Open-letter-to-veterinarians-on-referrals-to-training-and-behavior-professionals>

Ziv, G. (2017). *The Effects of Using Aversive Training Methods in Dogs – A Review*. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research* (19) 50-60

Resources

American Animal Hospital Association. (2015). Canine and Feline Behavior Management. Retrieved August 22, 2017, from

https://www.aaha.org/professional/resources/behavior_management_guidelines.aspx-gsc.tab=0AVMA

Banshockcollars.ca. (2007). Policy Statements of Leading Animal Welfare Professionals. Retrieved August 23, 2017, from

<http://www.banshockcollars.ca/policies.php>

Department for Food and Environmental Affairs. (2010). Effect of pet training aids, specifically remote static pulse systems, on the welfare of domestic dogs. Retrieved August 23, 2017, from

http://www.banshockcollars.ca/pdf/Defra_Study.pdf

[Pet Professional Guild. \(2017\). Position Statement on the Use Of Pet Corrective Devices](#) Retrieved August 23, 2017, from

<http://petprofessionalguild.com/Equipment-Used-for-the-Management-Training-and-Care-of-Pets>

Schilder, M.B.H., & van der Borg, J.A.M. (2004). Training dogs with help of the shock collar: short and long term behavioural effects. Retrieved August 22, 2017, from

<http://eldri.ust.is/media/ljosmyndir/dyralif/Trainingdogswitshockcollar.pdf>

Supporting Documents

[American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior Position Statement on Punishment.](#)

[American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior Position Statement on the Use of Dominance Theory and Behavior Modification in Animals.](#)

[Pet Professional Guild Position Statement on the Use of Shock in Animal Training.](#)

[Pet Professional Guild Position Statement on the Use of Pet Corrective Devices.](#)

[Pet Professional Guild Position Statement on the Use of Dominance Theory in Pet Training.](#)

**SHOCK-FREE
COALITION**

Copyright The Pet Professional Guild

www.Shockfree.org