



The Companion Animal Behaviour Therapy Study Group

An affiliate of the British Small Animal Veterinary Association

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The use of electronic training aids

CABTSG Policy Statement on Electronic Training Devices

A number of devices that administer an electric shock are now available to pet owners. The manufacturers of these devices recommend their use in the training or control of animals.

Their effectiveness depends upon the pain and fear experienced by the animal, but to use them correctly requires detailed understanding of behaviour and its motivation, as well as very precise timing. Few operators are able to achieve any reliable success with these devices and the consequences of failure can be a worsening of the problem behaviour. These devices are now available to dog trainers and the general public via mail order, through pet shops and veterinary practices. The product marketing implies that electronic training devices are simple, humane and effective.

Pet owners, with little or no experience or understanding of training can purchase this equipment and use it on their animals with no proper guidance and without any attempt to identify the motivation for the unwanted behaviour. Such an approach at best results in control of symptoms rather than treatment of cause and at worst may cause new problems to develop. For example, the use of pain and fear as a method of training or controlling an animal has been shown to have the potential to induce aggression and to cause long term behavioural problems. This is due to inappropriate associations made between the aversion of the device and the presence of unconnected stimuli in the environment, including people.

The indiscriminate use of shock collars therefore poses a threat to the safety of the general public, as well as to the welfare of the animal. We believe that sufficient alternative methods of treatment exist that such electronic training devices are redundant.

It is the responsibility of the veterinary surgeon to prevent unnecessary suffering in animals under our care.

Therefore, as an association affiliated to BSAVA, it is our duty to recommend that shock collars and all other related training and control aids should be banned from sale or use.

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