

Aversive training devices for dogs

Background

1. BVA has concerns about the use of aversive training devices to control, train or punish dogs. The use of devices such as electronic collars, as a means of punishing or controlling behaviour of companion animals is open to potential abuse and incorrect use of such training aids has the potential to cause welfare and training problems.

BVA position on electric pulse training collars for dogs

2. BVA is calling for a complete ban on the sale and use of electric pulse training collars for dogs in order to help protect animal welfare. Instead, BVA supports and recommends positive training methods.
3. Electric pulse devices are sometimes used in dog training as a form of punishment to prevent a dog from repeating bad behaviour. Although training a dog is important for their wellbeing, research¹ shows that electric pulse collars are no more effective than positive reinforcement methods.
4. BVA has consulted with experts and examined the evidenceⁱ. Research by Shalke, Stichnoth and Jones-Baade (2005) showed that the application of electric stimulus, even at a low level, can cause physiological and behavioural responses associated with stress, pain and fear.
5. In light of the evidence, BVA has concluded that electric pulse collars raise a number of welfare issues, such as the difficulty in accurately judging the level of electric pulse to apply to a dog without causing unnecessary suffering.

¹ The website '[Welfare in Dog Training](#)' provides scientific information on the welfare consequences of aversive training. Defra published two pieces of research assessing the effect of remote static pulse systems on the welfare of domestic dogs [2011](#) and [2010](#).

6. Moreover, [Defra's Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs](#) advises that 'good training can enhance a dog's quality of life, but punishing a dog can cause it pain and suffering ... All dogs should be trained to behave well, ideally from a very young age. Only use positive reward based training. Avoid harsh, potentially painful or frightening training methods'.

Alternative adverse training methods

7. We note the current lack of research and evidence regarding the welfare implications of the use of other aversive methods of training and control² which may be equally stressful for a dog. In light of the absence of evidence we are not currently calling for the sale of electric pulse pet containment fences (which use a collar to deliver a shock) or other training collars which do not deliver an electric pulse to be banned. We recommend that further evidence is collected on their use and effectiveness.
8. Until further research is completed around the impact of other aversive training collars, such as anti-bark spray collars, BVA is calling for a code of practice, as well as the regulation of the sale of these devices and manufacturer's instructions, to ensure that the potential adverse effects of use are highlighted to animal owners and consumers.

ⁱReferences:

- Training methods and owner–dog interactions: Links with dog behaviour and learning ability NJ Rooney, S Cowan - Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 2011 – Elsevier
- Behaviour of smaller and larger dogs: Effects of training methods, inconsistency of owner behaviour and level of engagement in activities with the dog C Arhant, H Bubna-Littitz, A Bartels, A Futschik... - Applied Animal ..., 2010 - Elsevier
- Survey of the use and outcome of confrontational and non-confrontational training methods in client-owned dogs showing undesired behaviors ME Herron, FS Shofer, IR Reisner - Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 2009 - Elsevier
- The relationship between training methods and the occurrence of behavior problems, as reported by owners, in a population of domestic dogs EJ Blackwell, C Twells, A Seawright... - Journal of Veterinary ..., 2008 – Elsevier
- Effects of 2 training methods on stress-related behaviors of the dog (*Canis familiaris*) and on the dog–owner relationship S Deldalle, [F Gaunet](#) - Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications ..., 2014 - Elsevier

² Such as choke collars, choke chains and prong collars, as well as collars using a noise, vibration, ultrasonic sound or spray of water or citronella

