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Comments from the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors on the Welsh
Assembly Government consultation on the use of electronic training aids on
dogs and cats.

Dear Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in the Welsh Assembly Government consultation on the use of electronic training aids on dogs and cats. The Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors, based in the United Kingdom, is the leading international organisation for qualified professional pet behaviour counsellors treating behaviour problems only on veterinary referral.

In response to the consultation document, we would like to address each of the questions individually, and have included some examples of the use of electric shock devices supplied by our members as an Appendix. These details were originally submitted to the Scottish Government consultation on the use, sale, distribution and possession of electronic training aids in November 2007, but apply equally to your consultation. Whilst the examples are not exhaustive, they provide an insight into the problems that can be caused by the use of electric shock devices. Due to client confidentiality and the guilt often experienced by owners who have, in all innocence, taken the advice of a third party who used an electric shock device, all identifying details have been removed.

Question 1: Should sonic or spray collars be treated differently to devices which transmit an electric shock or static pulse?

Although the cognitive theory principles of punishment apply to all these devices, that is, “the application of an aversive stimulus contingent upon the problem behaviour”, in the case of electric shock/static pulse devices the aversive stimulus applied to the animal is pain. Sonic or spray collars rely on the aversive properties of a noise or a spray of water or other substance.

Due to their ethology and particular sensitivity, punishment by any kind of device is not appropriate in modifying feline behaviour. Any form of punishment invariably increases anxiety and fear. Feline ethology is such that their primary response is flight and avoidance; which may remain specific or generalise, and unrelated neurotic behaviours in the cat easily occur, including reduced capacity to cope with social contacts. The latter is made more likely because, unlike the dog, it has not evolved to be dependent upon or attached to its social group. Whilst the application of any aversive stimulus has welfare considerations for the animal, causing dogs pain can never be an appropriate method for changing their behaviour. Sonic or spray collars might be considered as part of a wider canine behaviour modification programme to suppress entrenched behaviours, although the emphasis should be on the diagnosis of the underlying cause and the provision of an alternative behaviour.

All animals have genetically prepared responses for the removal of aversive states to maintain emotional homeostasis. Canines have four inherited responses available to them. They can hide, move away, socially appease or fight. Aggression is a response used in social or predatory defence when the dog feels under sufficient threat. Pain from electric shock is more likely to prompt an aggressive response than noise or spray, neither of which can be caused by social or predatory challenges.

We therefore support the differentiation of sonic or spray devices from electric shock/static pulse devices on two grounds:

1. Electric shock/static pulse collars cause pain to the dog, rather than an unpleasant noise or spray, compromising physical and emotional welfare.
2. Electric shocks are more likely to encourage an aggressive response from a dog, increasing the likelihood of future aggression and the possibility of injuring people.

Question 2: Should all types of electronic collars stay mats and scat mats which use an electrical delivery system be banned from being used, or just anti-bark and training collars.

All electronic devices that are capable of causing pain through electric shock should be prohibited. Any electric shock device has the same potential to compromise physical and emotional welfare and to encourage aggression in a dog (see question 1 above). There are alternative benign methods of training animals to do any of the behaviour sought by the users of any electronic shock devices, therefore none of them are necessary.

Question 3: Should fence containment systems be allowed as the animal is able to move away from the fence which it cannot do with an anti bark or training collar.

Fence containment systems should not be allowed even though the animal is able to move away from the fence. The training principle used in electric shock containment fences is identical to the one employed through the use of anti-bark and remote controlled electric shock collars. In each case the animal is punished by an electric shock for performing the undesired behaviour. In

the case of anti-bark collars the dog must avoid barking, in remote controlled electric shock collars the dog must avoid any behaviour stipulated by the operator, and in containment systems the dog must avoid placing itself near the boundary.

Whilst all electric shock devices are prone to the dog failing to associate the intended stimulus with the punishment, containment systems are particularly disposed to the dog associating the pain with an unintended stimulus. When a dog approaches a boundary, it does so for a reason. It may be greeting visitors or defending the property against a perceived intrusion by another dog. If it receives a shock as it does so, the shock will be associated with the most relevant stimulus present in the dog's mind at the time. It may therefore associate the pain not with approaching the boundary, but with visitors or passing dogs, resulting in subsequent fear and aggression towards those stimuli. Examples of this are contained in the appendix hereto.

The difference between electric boundary containment systems and electric stock fences, as used by farmers to control large livestock, is that the stock fence invariably follows a visible boundary, or is highlighted by white tape, so the animals can see it clearly. The arbitrary invisible boundary defined by an electric containment system does not provide a visible reason for the dog to understand why the shock happened. Animals understand that things they touch can be painful; thorns or sharp rocks exist in their environment. It is very easy for them to learn that something they brush up against should be avoided. Cattle and horses also have no need to leave their defined area as it usually provides for their physical and psychological needs.

Question 4: Do you believe that the provision prohibiting “unnecessary suffering” in section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 is sufficient to protect animals who wear electric shock or static pulse collars or come into contact with “scat mats”? If not, why not?

The legislation contained in Sec. 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (causing or permitting unnecessary suffering to a protected animal) already pertains to animals that are the subject of electric shock from collars or other devices. However, it is unlikely that a person committing an offence by activating such a device will be witnessed in the act, and therefore brought to court. The offences are, by the nature of the environment in which they are committed, hidden from public view. The current law therefore fails to protect animals that are the victims of electric shock devices.

Although the problem of illegal use would still exist were a ban to be introduced, the number of devices at large would diminish through natural wastage and not be replaced at source, thus protecting animals by removing the devices.

Question 5: In addition to question 4, under existing law each court case involving the use of these devices would have to be considered on their own merits. Do you think that is sufficient or do you believe that legal certainty via Regulations should be introduced. If so, why?

There are several reasons why prosecution of individual cases of causing or permitting unnecessary suffering through the use of electric shock devices is insufficient and that regulations to ban them should be introduced.

The first, as stated in question 4, is that the use of electric shock devices is rarely witnessed by a third party.

Even if the offence is witnessed by an informed third party, the pain caused by electric shock devices is transient. It may be highly significant at the time it is administered, but have no lasting observable effects such as trauma injuries. It is one of the reasons that electric shock is a preferred method of torturing human beings around the world.

“Suffering” is notoriously difficult to define; Sec 62 of the Act interprets it as: “suffering” means physical or mental suffering and related expressions shall be construed accordingly”, otherwise put: “suffering means suffering”. It is a state that we all recognise when we see it, but can be very difficult to describe in real terms.

Because suffering is subjective, what is inconsequential to one animal may be devastating to another. The degree of pain felt through each shock is also variable, dependent upon factors such as skin sensitivity and thickness, individual pain thresholds, the dog’s motivation at the time, hair length, contact with skin and wetness of electrical contacts.

Therefore, when a case is prosecuted these uncertainties introduce a minefield of legal arguments. For example, the only direct evidence is likely to be that of adversarial witnesses; it may be impossible to establish intensity settings on devices and what they mean to individual animals; there may be no observable after-effects to the animal. By producing an apparently loving owner and a healthy unmarked dog, an offence under Sec 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 may be almost impossible to prove beyond reasonable doubt. The legal certainty of regulations to prohibit the devices would clarify the issues.

For a ban to be effective, it should be an offence to manufacture, import, sell or otherwise distribute, use, cause to be used, or possess electric shock devices. This prevents not only their use, but also unscrupulous third parties benefiting from their illegal use by manufacturing, importing or distributing the devices. The issue of criminalising the current innocent owners of the devices could be dealt with by way of an amnesty during which they could be legally disposed of to the relevant authority.

REGULATORY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

If legislation is introduced to ban or regulate the sale or use of electric shock or static pulse collars there would be cost implications for those with commercial interests in these devices and possibly for some animal trainers. If it is decided to go forward with Regulations on specific proposals to ban the use of these devices it will be necessary for a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) to be prepared. In order to prepare a meaningful document it will be necessary for those who think that their business may be affected to provide as many details as possible of that affect. This should include detailing the financial consequences due to loss of business.

A ban on the use and sale of all electric shock devices is likely to have the effect of promoting a better understanding of animal welfare and training methods. There will be no discernable effect differentiation for any electric shock devices and they can be considered collectively for this purpose. People who resort to using any electric shock devices will have to use the other methods that are currently in use to control their pets. Whilst there may be a reduction in cases seen by pet behaviour counsellors where animals have been traumatized through the use of electric shock devices, there is likely to be a corresponding or enhanced increase in the number of clients seeking qualified professional assistance.

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**Appendix to comments from The Association of Pet Behaviour
Counsellors on the Welsh Assembly Government consultation on the
use of electronic training aids on dogs and cats.**

The following are actual cases submitted by members of the APBC, illustrating serious concerns over use of electric shock devices to train dogs. Due to client confidentiality and the guilt often experienced by owners who belatedly realise the trauma they have caused their pets, all identifying details have been removed.

1. Remote Controlled Electric Shock Collars.

1.1 Fourteen-month-old Border Collie.

This dog was referred as a “dog/dog aggression and chasing deer & cars.” At ten months of age the dog had not presented with any of the above but had started to chase sheep. It was taken to a dog trainer who repeatedly exposed it to sheep and electric shock from the collar. It does not now chase sheep, but its anxiety levels are extremely high. The chase problem had transferred onto cars and deer (for which it hadn't been shocked) and it could not cope with meeting strange dogs when confined on a lead. There was no bond with the owner. The use of the electric collar was the first time that this dog had been subjected to painful punishment, and was applied contingent upon a behaviour that the dog found extremely enjoyable. It lost confidence in the owner and obedience training broke down because it had become so defensive. Its only form of enjoyment was chasing, so it began to chase cars and deer, obviously an inherently dangerous practice.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

The electric collar worked to stop this dog chasing sheep, but because chase behaviour is breed specific and therefore internally rewarded through endorphin release, the dog needs an alternative outlet for it. Pain caused whilst chasing sheep was not enough to control the behaviour when directed towards other outlets, but it is likely that it contributed to an increase in general levels of anxiety (the apprehension of being exposed to a fear inducing stimulus). The increase in overall anxiety resulted in the dog failing to cope with a previously manageable slight fear of other dogs and the display of aggression. The dog previously only had a recall problem. After using the electric collar its problems increased significantly.

1.2 Twenty-month-old Doberman.

This case was referred as the bitch had been showing increasing aggression to her owners and this aggression had generalised to many different locations and scenarios. She was also displaying compulsive behaviours such as circling the owners' detached house for hours on end. The bitch was described as a 'problem puppy' and had been asked to leave puppy class. The owners were particularly bothered about the bitch's lack of recall and a 'behaviourist' introduced them to the remote control electric shock collar. Very quickly the bitch started to associate being let off the lead with pain and

would start jumping and grabbing at the owners as soon as they let her off lead. They punished this with a shock. She then started to get aggressive when they tried to put the lead on to go out of the house so they shocked her. Eventually the family was in fear of getting up in the night to go to the bathroom in case they disturbed the dog and she attacked.

When I met this bitch she was thin, her coat was dull and full of scurf. She did not settle for 1.5 hours after my arrival and during that time was running around the house grabbing at things randomly and circling. The behaviour had reached the stage where, despite starting to implement my modification plan, the family became so afraid of their dog that they had her put to sleep a few weeks after my visit.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

The Doberman reacted to the pain of the electric collar with aggression, associating that pain with being let off the lead. From the dog's perspective therefore, anyone who tried to let the dog off the lead was responsible for the pain. Attempts by the dog to prevent people letting her off the lead produced further shocks. The fear of this generalised to any touching of the collar and lead. The dog associated the proximity of the owners with the pain of the shock and defended itself from them. The owners were trapped in a cycle of using the electric collar on the dog for bad behaviour, which caused the bad behaviour, which resulted in more electric collar, which caused worse behaviour, ad infinitum. The use of an electric collar on this dog caused an escalating aggression problem it did not previously have, ultimately resulting in the dog's destruction.

1.3 Seven-month-old Retriever/Collie.

I saw a family with a seven-month-old Retriever/Collie pup. They were at their wits' end. The dog would not respond to training of any kind. The breeder had told them they just had a bad dog and suggested escalating punishment. They bought a shock collar and used it when the dog 'refused' to pay them attention. This dog presented as particularly submissive and fearful, however the over-riding problem was that it was deaf! Dispensing with the shock collar, we introduced training using a visual (light) marker and three training sessions made a huge difference.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

The pup was suffering from undiagnosed congenital deafness. It was not able to hear any commands or warning signals in order for it to avoid the shock. From the dog's perspective it was being subjected to painful shock for no apparent reason. The pup was developing fears of almost anything present in the environment when the shocks took place, resulting in increasing specific fears and anxiety. This highlights the problem of the general public availability of electric shock devices and their use without proper diagnosis.

1.4 Rescue Border Collie.

This dog was given electric shock collar treatment on two occasions for chasing sheep, as the first occasion had no effect. After the second occasion

the dog stopped chasing sheep locally. However when the owners travelled out of the area to go on holiday in Cornwall the collie chased sheep again. It provided a false sense of security for the owners, who thought their dog was 'cured' when in fact it was not reliable.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

The dog learned that chasing sheep in a specific location resulted in pain, but not that chasing sheep was not allowed. It is an example of the context specificity and lack of generalisation when owners use an electric collar as a "quick fix" solution to a problem without understanding the underlying behavioural mechanisms.

1.5 Eighteen-week-old Border Collie.

This dog was originally shocked at eighteen weeks old, to stop it chasing sheep. Although the shock worked to prevent sheep chasing, the owners reported that the dog was now chasing birds instead. The owners did not know what to do, as the only method of behaviour control they had was the shock collar. Via classes we taught them other techniques (recall, leave it, mid chase recalls) and the problem was solved. This indicates the problem when a collie is not given an outlet for its chase behaviours so just moves from chasing sheep to other objects. A dog chasing a bird is equally a big issue for land managers.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

This is another example of failing to understand the motivation behind the behaviour and relying on punishing the manifestation of the motivation, rather than controlling or diverting it. Punishing the dog for chasing sheep reduces emotional equilibrium and may actually increase the need to chase *something* in order to correct the emotional balance. Consequently, the shock collar only punished one aspect of the behaviour and relying on it did not provide an alternative; the problem was simply displaced.

1.6 Eighteen-month-old neutered male Springer Spaniel.

The owners of this dog were advised by a local trainer to use an Electric Collar to help with the dog's recall as it wouldn't listen to them, especially when it had picked up the scent of a rabbit. The first time they tried it, the dog did not come back, but lay down. The trainer went over and shocked the dog again and then proceeded to shake the dog to get it to stand up. The dog urinated and continued to stay down. The trainer went to shake it again and the dog went to bite her. It was shocked again and the trainer stamped on the lead. The owners then decided enough was enough and left without the collar. They were referred onto me as the dog would not tolerate a lead/collar and just lay down shaking and urinating. It had got to the stage where they could not take it out on a lead without this happening. It took a few weeks of slow desensitising using a harness instead of a collar to get the dog to walk on a lead again and finally it began to tolerate the lead and collar (soft one). Any show of firmness from the owners still results in the dog urinating and shaking but it is happy now to go for a walk. They did not want to confront the trainer.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

This case illustrates the escalation of the dog's defensive behaviour. Its initial reaction to the pain was to try to hide by lying down. This failed to stop it being repeated. The "trainer" further punished the dog, resulting in involuntary submissive urination. Eventually, unable to remain in the intensely fearful state, this dog resorted to aggression to defend itself.

A common error in the use of electric collars is that although their proponents punish the 'wrong' behaviour, they do not inform the dog what the expected behaviour is. On this occasion the electric collar became a tool for a brutal trainer. The use of the electric collar gave the dog an extreme fear of wearing a collar and lead it did not previously have. There were undoubtedly additional problems associated with increased anxiety, reducing the dog's emotional well-being and quality of life. That this appalling treatment of their dog went unreported also illustrates the reluctance of owners to confront the inappropriate use of electric shock collars by trainers.

1.7 Five-year-old male Rhodesian Ridgeback.

This dog was referred for sudden onset of aggression towards men. He had been well socialised and was friendly towards people he met, but would see a person in the distance and run off to greet them, failing to come back when called. The owner borrowed an electric collar and when the dog ran towards someone they repeatedly shocked him until he returned. It was difficult to ascertain the amount of times he was shocked, as the reason that the dog was aggressive towards men began to dawn upon the owner as she told me the story. All the people he met were farm workers in the fields and exclusively male. Friendliness towards people turned into fear of the associated pain. He attacked the men he met to make sure they did not cause him pain. He had trapped one farmer on top of a gate, biting a gash in his leg; another had taken refuge in his tractor.

The dog began to generalise his fear to all men (attacking them had worked – if he bit, they didn't cause him pain). He bit male visitors to the home that he had previously been friendly towards. Finally, he started to jump the garden wall to get at people walking on the road. He had bitten and hospitalised two passers-by. The owners embarked upon a protracted behaviour modification programme to counter condition his fear (and therefore aggression) towards men, and had to reinforce their property to prevent the dog jumping the wall. Originally the dog only had a recall problem, caused by him liking people too much.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

This dog associated the pain caused by the electric collar with what it had in his mind at the time: the men it was in the process of greeting. From the dog's perspective the men he was greeting caused him pain. It drove the perceived source of the pain away by using aggression towards them. The collar had been dispensed with at this stage, so no more shocks arrived and the dog

perceived that the new strategy was successful. Because of the generalisation curve, meeting any men caused some anxiety and it began to use the successful strategy to reduce that anxiety too. The use of the electric collar caused the dog to become fearfully aggressive towards men.

1.8 Two four-year-old female sibling Red Setters

These sisters had always lived together happily and were described as being the best of friends by the owners. One bitch (A) had started to jump the property fence chasing deer, rabbits and foxes and could not be called back by the owners. The other dog (B) would always wait behind in the garden. (A) would always return home but the owners worried about what may happen to her while she was gone. They considered training classes but felt that a quicker solution would be better as they had a young child and getting to regular classes was difficult. They purchased an electric collar and pretended to garden while they waited for A to try to run off. When she did they pressed the control. They report that Dog A squealed and turned round to Dog B who was close by. The owners report that dog A growled at B and snarled at her. They were called away instantly by the owners and all seemed ok. The owner used the collar once more that day and it did distract A from escaping on that occasion. She squealed the second time it was used also. Later that night both dogs were let into the garden for toileting break as normal and the owners had to rush out soon after as the dogs were fighting. This was in the area where dog A normally used to escape from the garden. From this time on, the aggression occurred on a daily basis and dog A began to growl at B in more and more situations including in the home and car. She would still escape from the garden whenever she had a chance. The owners were upset by the aggression and decided to send dog A for residential training for her recall problem and hoped that the break would help reduce the aggression between the two. She was away for 2 weeks. On her return she attacked dog B within 20 minutes of being in the home. After this I was called. Despite a behavioural programme, the dogs could no longer be left in the same room and eventually dog A was re-homed as a single dog since the owners decided the possibility of a fight was too risky around a very young child.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

Dog A associated the pain, which was enough to make it squeal, with the proximity of dog B. Aggression is normal adaptive behaviour in the face of a serious painful social threat and the perceived need to defend itself led Dog A to use aggression against its sister. This is an example of the difficulty of ascertaining what the dog is aware of when it is being punished. In this case the dog did not associate the attempt to escape with the punishment and so continued to do so. The dogs' previous good relationship irrevocably broke down because both perceived themselves to be the victims of unprovoked attacks by the other, whereas the first actual attack came from the collar. The need to avoid the sister probably drove Dog A to escape even more often.

1.9 Ten-month-old male Staffordshire Bull Terrier Cross.

The owner employed an electric collar to reduce her dog's chewing while he was left in the garden by his kennel. Owner worked in the veterinary industry.

No behavioural assessment had been sought about the dog's destruction habit. An e-collar was borrowed. The owner waited inside the kitchen and watched for her dog to begin chewing. She engaged the collar when she saw him bite onto the kennel. The dog began screaming continuously, leapt up and charged around the garden. The owner realised that he was extremely distressed and ran out into the garden. He was difficult to catch as he was frantic. When she finally got him to come to her she removed the collar. Her dog was shaking and was clingy. She reports that he was more nervous and seemed subdued for the whole day and next day. When she next left him in the yard he chewed the kennel. The owner then sought behavioural advice. With more provision of appropriate toys and after the dog matured his chewing gradually disappeared.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

Chewing is a behaviour that reduces anxiety. It is also normal adolescent dog behaviour. This dog was being shocked either because it had anxiety it was trying to relieve, or because it was engaging in normal dog behaviour. In either case the shock can only have served to increase anxiety and therefore actually encourage the chewing behaviour.

The shock was extremely painful to this dog, illustrating that body sensitivity differs in individuals. What may be mildly irritating to one may be particularly painful to another. Finally, this is yet another example of punishment failing to provide an alternative behaviour in which the dog may engage.

2. Electric Shock Training Lead.

2.1 Three-year-old English Springer Spaniel litter sisters.

These spaniels were referred to me for 'excessive pulling on lead'. The owners had their own estate and had not ever walked their dogs off their land. However, they decided it would be a nice idea to take the dogs down to their yacht in the Mediterranean so to prepare the bitches for this they took them by car to a local seaside resort to walk them on the prom on a sunny and very busy weekend. This is when the bitches displayed the 'pulling on lead' to the extent that their paws bled. In an effort to teach the bitches to walk on the lead properly, the owner invested in an integral shock collar and lead. Every time the dog pulled on the lead, the owner pressed a button on the lead handle and the dog got a shock. By the time I saw these bitches, they were frightened to go outside their walled garden and the owners could not even take them off lead on their own land. The sisters had also started to fight with each other and when one of them needed veterinary attention the vet had to come to the house because the owners could not get the bitch in the car. The bitch was almost impossible to treat because she was so frightened.

The bitches now spend their life in the walled garden and hide from visitors, including the house-sitter who looks after them when the owners are away. The owners thought my behaviour modification programme was too much work. Unfortunately a complete lack of understanding of what they were doing

to their dogs changed the problem from an easily solved “pulling on the lead” to a severe phobic reaction to almost everything.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

These two dogs were under-socialised, having never been off their own estate. On the first occasion they were taken out on the lead they were subjected to what for them was a very fearful environment. They tried to escape the environment by running away, but were prevented by being on the lead. This caused them to pull until their feet bled, illustrating how frightened they must have been. The next time they were taken out they were subjected not only to the fear-inducing environment, but also to painful electric shock. They would have no way of discriminating what, of all the novel stimuli in the environment, was causing the electric shocks. They inevitably associated going out on the lead with a fearful experience, causing an increase in anxiety and fears of almost everything outside their own familiar surroundings, and anyone entering them. Fighting between the two is an indicator of the chronic stress of living with permanent anxiety and concomitant increase in aggression. The owner appears to have a total lack of understanding of the basics of dog behaviour, and the immediate solution marketed by the providers of electric shock devices severely exacerbated the problem.

3. Electric Boundary or "Freedom" Fence.

3.1 Jack Russell Terrier.

The Jack Russell Terrier in question had not been with the owners for very long but loved to have a dig and to escape from the owners' garden. To stop this behaviour they took advice on installing a virtual fence. Prior to this, the dog had been a friendly little chap running up to visitors when they came to the garden gate. After the fence was installed this friendly little JRT started to attack visitors, but the owners could not figure out why. I explained to them that because of the fence every time a person came to visit and the dog went to greet them he got an electric shock. The dog was only reacting to the pain and had associated the visitors with receiving pain. The virtual fence did have the desired effect, it stopped the JRT from escaping but now they had a dog that was a huge liability with visitors and passers-by. I gave them advice to stop using the fence immediately and on how to make the garden a nice and rewarding place for the dog to be, and how to make it “terrier proof”.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

The dog associated the pain generated by the fence system with the approach of people it was greeting. Greeting people therefore became an aversive experience, because the dog was shocked by the “freedom fence”. The fence prevented it from escaping, but instilled in the dog a fear of people approaching the garden. The dog used defensive aggression to try to stop the perceived cause of the pain: the people. Simple environmental enrichment measures could have achieved the desired result without the pain and dangerous change in attitude towards visitors.

3.2 Labrador.

This dog is a typical friendly Labrador in most respects, but unfortunately he bit a man who was in the garden painting the house, causing injury. He normally welcomes visitors into the house, but barks and becomes quite agitated when he sees people walking on the footpath behind the boundary hedge. He habitually shows this territorial behaviour, including aggression on a few occasions. As a young dog he used to roam, and as an interim measure until the garden was securely fenced, he was fitted with a shock collar. This was designed such that a warning buzzer sounded first, but if he continued to approach the perimeter of the garden, he received a mild electric shock. This only happened once, when he fled, after which the buzzer alone prevented him from going any nearer to the boundary. Although this was several years ago, to this day he still reacts to similar noises by running away. It seems that he thought the man had entered the property through the hedge, and as such constituted a threat. Certainly the pain he associates with the boundary explains in part his excessive reaction to the threat posed.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

In this case the dog not only associated the location with the pain of the fencing system, but also generalised the sound of the warning buzzer to other similar sounds, causing him to run away in fear. It is likely that this dog's anxiety levels increase when he hears similar noises and this could contribute to increased stress. It illustrates that the fearful experiences of electric shock devices and stimuli associated with them, including buzzers and people, are extremely long lasting.

3.3

Fourteen-month-old male Doberman and two eight-year-old Setters (male and female).

Living in the country my clients did not want to fence off the entire area so they bought a freedom fence. The fence crossed a path that led into some woods. The fence worked to keep the dogs in the property. When the owner was with the dogs they were walked up the path and the collars taken off before they reached the crossing point. The owner reported that the Doberman would get jumpy as they approached this point and several times he had had to really encourage him to continue the walk, taking him by his collar past the point. He never seemed to relax over the weeks. Growling towards the owner and the other male dog whilst approaching this area started to occur after three weeks. The owner reported that he noticed tension between the dogs in this area and a squabble occurred on one occasion. The male setter began to show tense responses around the Doberman and more fights would start on walks together (always on the way up towards the woods but closer and closer to the house over time.) At the time when I was called in the setter had stopped allowing the Doberman to freely move around the property and fights would occur daily. Veterinary treatment had been necessary.

Expert Behavioural Opinion

These dogs learned that if they approached the area of the fence they received a shock. This stopped them crossing the boundary as expected. However, the association of the pain with the location at first made them 'jumpy', that is agitated and wary of approaching, and then increasingly aggressive. The owner was forcing the Doberman, sometimes physically, towards a location that the dog had learned would be painful. The dog used aggression to deter a painful social interaction. Pain generalises to all the perceived stimuli in the environment and, for the Doberman, this included the other male dog. Defensive aggression increased in both dogs as they approached the source of the pain and the ensuing fight could be predicted earlier and earlier in the walk each time. Eventually both dogs became so defensive towards each other that the aggression generalised to the whole of their environment.

Conclusion

In every instance, the use of an electric shock device compromised the welfare of the dog; one to the extent that it had to be destroyed. In every instance the 'problem' could have been resolved without the use of electric shock devices, in many cases with considerably less effort and certainly without instigating the additional problems caused by the device. In every instance the electric shock device introduced or increased anxiety in the dog. In many cases this caused aggression, which had not been originally present, to be directed towards the owner, visitors or companion dogs.

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