



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

Barking Control and Containment Systems

RSPCA Queensland gets many enquiries regarding the use of collars and other devices for dealing with barking and other problems. As the State's premier animal welfare organisation, we are opposed to the use of any devices that cause pain or suffering to our dogs. We use only positive training methods that align with the associations Five Freedoms for Animals, as below.

The Five Freedoms:

1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst
2. Freedom from Discomfort
3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease
4. Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour
5. Freedom from Fear and Distress



We also do not recommend any collar or system that involves an aversive method because we do not believe them to be the most successful way to manage problem behaviours. There are inherent dangers in the use of punishment with dogs, mainly that we run the risk of the dog making the wrong association between the cause (behaviour or event) and effect (punishment). For example, if a shock collar is used to deter a dog from barking at the postman, they may make the association that whenever they see a person walking past, they get hurt. Thus, they may not like a person coming to the gate anymore. This fear may extend to all visitors to your home, and possibly result in the dog becoming aggressive to people.

Similarly, containment collars operate by creating a negative association when the dog approaches the fence. Unfortunately, you cannot control what is on the other side of the fence, or why your dog approaches. A curious child who wants to say hello may encourage your dog to approach the fence, only to shock them when they get close! This is a very reasonable reason for your dog to be wary of children, or so your dog thinks. The fact that the containment collar produces a negative effect regardless of why your dog neared the property's boundary is downright dangerous.

In addition to this, these systems do nothing to let our dogs know what we would like them to do. Our dogs aren't being intentionally "naughty" or "bad," they are simply unaware that barking all day is not what we desire. We need to teach dogs the behaviours we want them to show and that these behaviours can be more rewarding than barking is. For example, lying quietly in bed may not be very rewarding on its own, but lying quietly in bed chewing on a bone is very rewarding. Many dogs will cease nuisance barking when they are provided with a positive outlet for their energy (e.g. Treat balls, bones or Kong toys) or when they are in an environment where they are able to relax (e.g. a crate or den area).

In order to successfully manage behavioural problems, it is essential to establish when and why the dog is engaging in the unwanted behaviour, such as barking. Understanding the reason for the



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behaviour may involve keeping a diary or record, and getting information from your neighbours. It may involve some time, reading and learning, and getting help from your vet or a qualified dog trainer. For more information, ask for our information sheets Barking, Crating for Management, Denning, Entertaining Your Dog, Kongs and Nothing in Life is Free.

Unless the underlying motivations for the behaviour are addressed managing barking, escaping or any other problem with punishment will not be successful. In addition, the welfare of the dog will suffer.

Research into the long term effectiveness of punishment in the form of electric shock treatment in the Journal of Veterinary Behaviour (Overall, 2007) found that:

- Shock is not treatment for pets with behavioural concerns
- Shock is not a way forward
- Shock does not bring dogs back from euthanasia, instead it may send them there
- There are many negative consequences that are dismissed by those promoting the techniques.

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