

LOOKING FOR A DOG TRAINER - HSUS WARNS BEWARE OF ABUSIVE TRAINING METHODS

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES WARNS:

BEWARE OF ABUSIVE TRAINING METHODS

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WASHINGTON -- Dog owners often seek professional advice when it comes to training their animal companion and there are many options available. From DVDs, books and television programs, to local dog trainers offering private lessons and group classes, consumers have choices about the methods and styles in which they want to raise their pup.

Are you supposed to be your dog's parent or pack leader? Do you want your dog to be an obedience champ or do you just need him to stop jumping on strangers? What are the boundaries you want set?

According to Stephanie Shain, director of outreach for companion animals for The HSUS, "Just like with human communications and psychology, there are varied philosophies, methods and approaches when it comes to communicating with your dog. It is important to define your goals and find a system that works best – and safely -- for you. Unfortunately, we know of many cases in which a private trainer's methods were abusive and the animal was injured or killed." Shain warns that if people do choose to work with a trainer, they must be sure that the trainer's methods are safe. The HSUS offers these tips to help ensure that your dog is trained safely and successfully, as well as the red flags that may signal abusive training.

Red Flags:

- Trainers should never use electronic aids like shock collars which will hurt your dog and can damage your bond with him.
- Rubbing your dog's nose in an "accident" will never work and will only confuse your dog. This method is harmful, unnecessary, unsanitary, and shows your dog that you do things to him that are scary and unpleasant.
- Screaming is not training. While a confident tone of voice is helpful, yelling may work against you by instilling fear in the dog. Dogs will learn better when they feel safe and secure. Screaming takes that feeling away.
- If your dog is afraid of a trainer, you should be too. A dog who is not normally fearful should not be cowering or whimpering around a trainer. If your dog is not comfortable, the training will not be successful and you should stop the session immediately.
- Never let a trainer dominate you or your dog. People who try to physically dominate their dogs may get bitten. Trainers should never sit on, kneel on, or otherwise force your dog onto his back. Do not let anyone talk you into doing this. Your dog may try to bite or could get seriously injured from this process.
- Choking is not training. Always avoid the use of choke-type collars and trainers who would lift a dog off of the ground by his collar. Recent scientific studies show that choke collars cause injury.

Even if the trainer uses a regular collar or harness, they should never yank your dog around on the leash.

- "Don't worry, he's fine," is something a trainer should never have to say. If your trainer is constantly reassuring you that their methods are safe, it's time to look for another trainer. Training techniques should always appear safe without reassurances.
- Physical violence is unacceptable. This may seem obvious, but never let a trainer hit or kick your dog. Such methods are ineffective, dangerous, and possibly illegal. Training should never be abusive.
- Bleeding is bad. Your dog should never bleed, vomit, or foam at the mouth as the result of a training session. If any of these things occur, contact your veterinarian immediately. Injuries should not be a part of a training session.
- Trust your instincts. If you are ever concerned or uncomfortable with anything that your trainer is doing to your dog, end the session. Your dog depends on you to keep him safe, and you have an obligation to speak up to protect him.

For more information visit www.hsus.org or www.puppybuyersguide.org.

The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization with nearly 10 million members and constituents. The HSUS is a mainstream voice for animal welfare, with active programs in companion animals, disaster preparedness and response, wildlife and habitat protection, marine mammals, animals in research, equine protection and farm animal welfare. The HSUS protects all animals through education, investigation, litigation, legislation, advocacy and field work. The nonprofit organization is based in Washington and has field representatives and offices across the country.