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The Truth About Shock Collars, And Why You
Should Say No To Them...

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Before we start, it should be made clear that this is not just another reactionary topical argument by a person/company who has no practical experience with the products in question. In mid-2010, after five years of being one of Australia's leading sellers of static correction collars, we made the decision to no longer sell or support 'shock collars'. We believe that we have made the right decision, based on various factors that we would like to share with you; First and foremost, we believe that static correction collars are an extremely effective method of controlling an undesired behaviour in extremely stubborn dogs, when used properly and with proper training. However, the 'used properly and with proper training' part is sadly neglected as owners pursue a quick fix option with little to no follow-up.

And even in situations of correct usage and training, we are not confident that a

static correction collar is the right choice in the majority of cases. To draw a parallel, it's like taking prescription migraine tablets to treat a small headache – it's just not necessary, or even wise, as a first line of defense. Shock collars are increasingly being used on dogs that just do not need them.

Personally, we have always recommended starting with other methods of correction before using a static correction collar, but we now felt it was time to put our money where our mouth is and stand completely by those other forms of correction in place of shock collars.

As dog lovers above all else, our priority is providing safe and humane products to solve dog problems and selling shock collars was the one area where we felt that we could not 100% adhere to this self-imposed code.

Shock collars cause pain. There's no dressing it up or passing it off as something else. To say it is similar to the shocks we get from the carpet, car or a battery is downplaying it to a misleading degree. Whether they put out less power than a household battery is irrelevant – the proof is in the use and the reaction. The pain may only last a fraction of a second, and your dog may learn very quickly from it, but it's still a very unpleasant sensation. Sometimes it's absolutely necessary when all other options have failed, and that's fine. But too many are prescribing and/or using shock collars as the first and only option in addressing a behavioural problem. Advertising shock collars as the 'best option' is a dangerously misleading sales tactic, as it does not take into account any of the variables that make up what is a complex decision.

The effectiveness rating for shock collars is advertised as anywhere from 95-99%, depending on who you ask, and those figures are pretty accurate. However, what's not stated is that only 5% of all dogs should even need to get to the stage where a shock collar is absolutely required. Spray correction collars and vibration correction collars combined can and do reduce nuisance barking in the large majority of dogs, and without the painful aspects of shock collars. Some retailers even tout that static shock collars have the lowest rate of return. But what does that have to do with you and your dog and, more importantly, your dog's welfare? A low rate of return is great for a business owner, because it means they retain their profit margin from the initial sale. We could sell 100 shock collars to 100 dog owners and only get 1 return, because the products did their job in 99 of the cases. But out of those 99 cases, we can attest that only a small handful would absolutely have needed a shock collar to treat their problem. In 2010, we performed a comprehensive survey study into spray correction collars and the results showed that 81% of participants had positive results over the training period. Later in 2011, we hope to perform a similar study with vibration correction collars, so that we can back up the claims that we already know are fairly accurate.

When the survey study is released in May 2011, we will dispel most of the myths

about spray collars, including the idea that certain breeds, ages or sizes are immune to their effects.



In a perfect world, shock collars would only make up 5% of our overall business, because people would have used other methods first and trained their dog correctly with the products before resorting to static correction devices. We're not activists who are ranting and raving over products that we have no real world experience with. Our position comes from extended use and experience with shock collars over the years. And there is very little to gain from dropping support of shock collars, because we are effectively turning away more than 60% of our existing business.

Now, are we against static correction training as a whole? No. Working dogs and hunting dogs get great benefits from remote control static correction training, vital to the tasks that they perform in their day-to-day lives. But these dogs make up only a small fraction of Australia's dog population, which are primarily domestic pets. For non-bark control related training of domestic pets, a spray or vibration trainer will still do the job in most cases.

Likewise, static correction is the only form of correction we would recommend for implementing an invisible dog containment fence. Containing an escape artist

dog goes from being a nuisance problem to a life-threatening problem, so a much stronger correction is required to train the dog to know its boundaries. But it should not be the only form of fencing, because we have witnessed first-hand several occasions where a containment fence has failed.

So, where do we stand and what are our recommendations in the ongoing shock collar debate? Firstly, we believe that static correction anti bark collars should be available to purchase by prescription only after consulting a practicing veterinarian or qualified and professional trainer that has no financial interest in the product through selling them directly or by affiliation. Proof that all other methods have been exhausted should be required before such a prescription is issued.

As is the case with firearms and other hunting/farming equipment, we believe a permit should be required to use a static correction remote control trainer for hunting, working and law enforcement dogs. And, in cases where proof can be provided that other methods have failed, for domestic pets.

For containment purposes, we believe there should be no restrictions on static correction hidden fences, so long as traditional fencing has either failed or is not an option at the location. Professional installation and introduction training should be mandatory.

This is not a position that will make us popular with suppliers or competitors, but it is an informed and researched decision nonetheless. If you love your pet and you're prepared to spend money to address a problem, as opposed to abandoning the animal or ignoring the behaviour, then we urge you to make the socially responsible decision to only try static shock products as an absolute last line of defense.

We will continue to honour warranties and guarantees on static training products we have sold in the past, but we will no longer be offering new static correction products for sale.

Thanks for taking the time to read this.

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