

Collars 'turned dogs into killers', The Argus.co.uk, October 25, 2001

A woman who used electric collars in a bid to tame her dogs today called for them to be banned after her pets killed another dog.

Ostarra Langridge, 53, of Bath Road, Worthing, began using electric shock collars on an animal behaviourist's recommendation to stop Sunshine, Teddy Bear and Indi from misbehaving.

Miss Langridge admitted in Brighton Magistrates Court yesterday that her pets were not under proper control at the time they killed the shihtzu and during another attack two days later on a cocker spaniel.

Miss Langridge told The Argus today that she reared the three Alsatian cross-breeds from birth and bottle-fed them.

She sought the help of a behaviourist when they started to run away from her on their walks along the beach.

The dogs were given shock collars, which Miss Langridge was told to keep on for three months and activate when they misbehaved.

But the first time the dogs got a shock was by mistake, after a small dog they were walking past made Miss Langridge jump.

From then on her pets associated the shocks with small dogs and became afraid of them.

When Miss Langridge described the day in July when her dogs turned on a shihtzu she had tears in her eyes.

She said at her home today: "I was out for a walk with all three of them. I saw an old lady walking towards me with her little shihtzu and she asked if my dogs were all right.

"I said yes, but she was scared so I made them sit down. I asked her to pick her dog up because it was shaking, but she said no. As she passed my dogs all pulled me backwards and went for her dog.

"Eventually I got my dogs off. The old lady was sitting on the floor crying and her little dog was lying there, wounded but its tail was still wagging.

"It was taken to the vet's but they had to put it down.

"I was in a right state because they had never harmed anyone or anything before. They grew up around cats and other animals.

"I asked for the help of experts and even the Army and it was then I realised it was because of the electric shock collars.

"They connected the pain of the electric shock with little dogs because of the first time I used the collar. The day that machine came in this house I regret."

In court yesterday Len Batten, prosecuting, said the owner of the shihtzu described how Miss

Langridge was being dragged along by her three dogs. When she fell to the ground the dogs broke away and attacked her pet.

Trevor Cooper, defending, said Miss Langridge was a fit and responsible person to have a dog.

He said she paid the vet's fees for the other dogs' owners and apologised for the pain and suffering.

Mr Cooper said many animal welfare organisations wanted the shock collars banned.

He said the dogs had since received further training. The magistrate ordered the dogs to be kept under proper control in the future.

They must be kept muzzled and on a lead in a public place and must not be taken out by anyone under 16. Miss Langridge was ordered to pay £300 costs.