



## Maplewood Dog Training

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### Facts about E-Devices:

## What's to Know about Electronic Collars & Fences

by Katrin Andberg

Our American society, in many areas, has accepted the use of electronic shock or stimulation devices to control behavior. There are schools for disabled children that use such devices and many routinely use them with their pets. Dog owners often use these devices to contain their pets in a yard with an electronic fence, control unwanted barking, or to control off-leash behavior with a manually operated device. When using such methods to control our dog's behavior, there are some very real facts that every owner needs to be aware and informed of:

### Fact #1 - An Adult Dog has the Mental Cognition of a 2-year-old Human Child

- Shock is a complicated concept and dogs can't cognitively understand 'invisible'
- Dogs can understand "shock – pain – fear"
- Studies have shown that your adult dog has the mental cognition of a 2-year-old human child
- Would you ask your 2-year-old child to be subjected to "shock – pain – fear?"

### Fact # 2 - Punishment uses Fear to Gain Compliance

- Punishment uses fear to gain compliance
- When you form or base your relationship with another, be it dog or person, on fear you lose trust
- The most common form of aggression in dogs is fear aggression
- The most common reason for fearful dogs to resort to aggression is that they feel that no human person is safe and trustworthy enough to reduce their fear and help to keep them safe
- When dogs feel they have no trustworthy person to come to when they are afraid, they will resort to aggression

### Fact # 3 – Shock Devices use Pain to Gain Compliance

- Shock devices use pain to gain compliance
- Dogs in pain are more likely to resort to aggression and bite
- Using shock and pain to control behavior significantly increases instances of aggression and bites

### Fact # 4 - Punishment Only Suppresses Behavior

- Behavior science has long known that punishment only suppresses behavior; it doesn't change the underlying reason for it
- If you never address the underlying reason the dog or person is doing the behavior you want to change, the behavior will continue to resurface over time
- If you are using punishment to control behavior, you will, over time need to resort to increasingly more severe punishment as the dog or person you are punishing becomes tolerant to the form of punishment
- In order to successfully, long term, address and change the behavior you will need to look at why the behavior is being practice, and what reinforcement from the environment the dog is receiving when he does the behavior, then take steps to change how that dog can gain the same reinforcement for other more appropriate behaviors

### Fact # 5 - Timing is Everything

- When you are trying to influence behavior, you have a 1 to 3 second window in which to do it, a 1 to 3 second window for cause and effect
- The farther away from 1 second post behavior that you use either reinforcement or punishment, the more likely it is that you are actually influencing other behavior different than what you think
- Most people are very late with reinforcement or timing. Just think of our society- we incarcerate criminals years after they have committed a crime, yet our statistics show how ineffective that form of behavior change is and repeat offences occur 61% of the time even after incarceration.
- When using punishment and fear to influence behavior, very often we have poor timing and very effectively build fearful associations with behavior we were not intending
  - It is common for people using a manual electronic shock collar with their dog, to effectively train their dog not to move off of one spot, due to building a very strong association with fear of punishment for moving

### Fact # 6 - Unexpected Associations

- As stated above, “Timing is everything.” When you use punishment, shock and fear to gain compliance you often also gain a number of very negative unexpected associations in your dog’s mind
- As also stated above, “Dogs can’t understand invisible.” When using shock to control your dog’s behavior your dog can’t understand where it is coming from
- Dogs corrected with shock, often form negative associations with what they happen to be looking at or hearing at the time of the shock. This will often change how the dog views what they are looking at or listening to
- The most common things that dog’s look at are- people, other dogs, other animals, bikes and cars
- It is very common for dogs controlled with punishment and shock to build very negative and dangerous associations with people, dogs, other animals and moving objects often leading to very serious acts of aggression
- Example:
  - Your dog is outside being contained in your yard by an electric fence
  - Your dog sees a neighborhood child outside the fence boundary riding his bike
  - Your dog says, “Oh yay! Johnny is out, I want to go see him!..Oh, wait, ‘beep, beep, shock...pain-fear.’”
  - Over time your dog’s response when he sees little Johnny outside the fence boundary riding his bike will no longer be, “Oh yay! Johnny is out!” it will become, “Johnny is out, ‘beep, beep, shock,’ Johnny must be **bad.**”
  - As your dog’s response changes and frustration builds up, it is only a matter of time before you dog says, “Johnny is bad, very bad! I must make him go away before ‘beep, beep, shock’ gets me!” and he takes the shock of the fence to go aggressively attack Johnny and ‘make him go away.’

The leading sources of animal behavior in both the veterinary and professional community discourage the use of electronic shock devices to control behavior. The use of such devices is detrimental to both the physical and mental health of your dog and can have very serious negative side effects, including serious aggression. When making choices on what methods to employ to address, change and control behavior, it is critical that dog owners be informed of the pros and cons of any training or behavior modification protocol, and that they make educated decisions for safe and compassionate dog training and behavior change.