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The use of choke and prong collars.

Best practices.

The use of dog correction devices.

The importance of puppy socialization.

Dominance theory in animal training.

Effective animal training procedures lay the foundation for a dog's healthy socialization and training and helps prevent behavior problems. Ensure dogs live in nurturing and stable environments to better prevent behavior problems and help ensure the overall well-being of the dog.

The use of collars and leads that are intended to apply constriction, pressure, pain or force around a dog's neck (such as choke chains and prong collars) should be avoided.

Though data demonstrating the exact damage that can be potentially caused by using choke and prong collars is incomplete, experience has shown that soft tissue injuries are common and, as is the case with any harsh training method, the damage to the animal-human relationship results.

It is found that training and behavior problems are consistently and effectively solved without the use of choke or prong collars with the alternative methods reinforcing the animal-human bond.

Evidence indicates that rather than speeding the learning process, harsh training methods actually slow the training process, add to the dog's stress and can result in both short-term and long-term psychological damage to dogs.

Common problems which can result from the use of choke and prong collars:

Physical problems.

There are many cases of dogs suffering soft tissue damage, eye problems, strangulation (leading to death), tracheal/esophageal damage and neurological problems resulting from the use of choke/prong collars.

Negative reinforcement and positive punishment.

Choke chains and prong collars are designed to administer negative reinforcement and positive punishment.

Training techniques based in these two learning theory quadrants are prone to side effects.

As an example, a dog wearing a choke or prong collar that fearfully barks and lunges at another dog would then be choked or pain inflicted by the prong collar.

The pain and choking then adds to the negative association the dog wearing the collar has with other dogs.

This is the polar opposite of what an ideal training protocol is designed to accomplish.

Even if a dog is free of reactivity issues, using a choke or prong is less than ideal.

Today there are many effective alternatives available for training and management of skills where choke and prong collars have been traditionally used for teaching loose-leash-walking and formal/precision heel training.

Conclusion.

All training should be conducted in a manner that encourages the dog to enjoy training and become more confident and well-adjusted dogs. Optimize the use of functional analysis to identify and resolve problem behaviors where choke and prong collars are typically used such as leash-pulling and lunging.

Trainer should encourage and use positive operant and respondent training methods, both personally and professionally.

Dog owners should actively recommend against the use of choke and prong collars while actively promoting the use of flat buckle collars, head halters, harnesses and other types of control equipment that are safer for the animal.

The Use of Shock in Animal Training

It also my view that electric shock in the guise of training constitutes a form of abuse towards dog's, and, given that there are highly effective, positive training alternatives, should no longer be a part of the current pet industry culture of accepted practices, tools or philosophies.

Behavior problems.

The use of electronic stimulation, or 'shock' or 'e-collars' to care for, manage and train/modify the behavior of dog animals is completely unnecessary.

Electric training collars are already banned in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, Slovenia, Germany and in some states in Australia," as well as Finland and parts of Canada (Stilwell, n.d.), and Wales (Welsh Government, 2016).

Nevertheless, shocking pet dogs remains a common, if controversial, training practice in many other countries and by certain dog owners and trainers.

The British Veterinary Association and the British Small Animal Veterinary Association both recommend "against the use of electronic shock collars and other aversive methods for the training and containment of animals" and state that shocks "and other aversive stimuli received during training may not only be acutely stressful, painful and frightening for the animals, but may also produce long-term adverse effects on behavioural and emotional responses." (British Small Animal Veterinary Association, 2012).

The general pet-owning public must be better served by professional organizations and APBT associations to help them ensure their dogs live in nurturing and stable environments where they are able to maintain a positive emotional state and feel safe. His will, in turn, play a significant role in preventing behavior problems and enhancing dog bite safety protocols.

Depending on an individual dog's genetics, environment and early learning experiences, behavior problems may still occur, in spite of an owner's best efforts.

Dog owners need to be aware that such issues can be consistently, reliably and effectively resolved -- or at the very least successfully managed -- with the implementation of humane, modern, science-based training methods based on positive reinforcement, and without the use of any form of so-called electronic stimulation.

(Note: For the purposes of this document, electronic stimulation devices include --but are not limited to -- products often referred to as e-collars, training collars, shock collars, e-touch, stimulation, tingle, TENS unit collar, remote trainers, and e-prods.)

A positive reinforcer is a stimulus such as food, games, treats, toys (i.e. anything that the dog considers to be a reward) that, when presented following a behavior, makes it more likely that the same behavior will be repeated (Burch & Bailey, 1999).

As in today, can there really still be a debate over the issue of using pain as a “method” of animal training?

Decades of peer-reviewed, scientific studies show, whether discussing dogs, humans, dolphins or elephants, that electric shock as a form of training to teach or correct a behavior is ineffective at best, and physically and psychologically damaging at worst.

Renowned board certified animal behaviorist and veterinarian, Dr. Karen Overall (2005) states: “There are now terrific scientific and research data that show the harm that shock collars can do behaviorally.

There is no longer a reason for people to remain misinformed.

The use and application of shock.

Applying an electric shock provides no effective strategy for an animal to learn a new or alternative behavior; it simply inflicts pain and risks making him fearful, anxious and/or aggressive.

Generally speaking, a pet owner’s main goals when shocking their dog are, firstly, to punish perceived misbehavior in the moment and, secondly, reduce future recurrences of the undesirable behavior.

There can be no doubt that electric shock is a punisher, and for punishment to be effective as a means to training a dog -- or any other animal -- there are three critical elements that must be fulfilled: consistency, timing and intensity.

First, the punishment must occur every time the unwanted behavior occurs.

Second, it must be administered within, at most, a second or two of the behavior.

Third, it must be unpleasant enough to stop the behavior.

To reiterate, in the real world outside science laboratories, meeting these three criteria is virtually impossible for a dog training professional, and most certainly for a dog owner.

Citing a variety of studies, Ziv (2017) concludes that “even when experienced trainers operate [shock] collars, the welfare of the dogs could be compromised,” and states it to be “likely that the threat to dogs’ welfare would be even greater in the hands of unskilled dog owners, who might lack the timing and consistency needed for this type of training to be successful...due to the aversive nature of these devices and the likelihood of training ineffectiveness, their use can be abusive.”

The consequences of using shock.

Dogs are cognitive, intelligent creatures that experience emotions such as fear, anxiety, and joy.

They are subject to the same laws of applied behavior analysis (ABA) as any other living organism.

“Punishment doesn’t teach learners what to do instead of the problem behavior.

Punishment doesn’t teach caregivers how to teach alternative behaviors.

Punishment is really two aversive events – the onset of a punishing stimulus and the forfeiture of the reinforcer that has maintained the problem behavior in the past.” (Friedman, 2010).

Especially troubling for pet professionals is that punishment requires an increase in the intensity of the aversive stimulus for it to have any hope of maintaining behavior reduction.

Forcing dogs to comply to avoid being shocked does not enhance the canine-human relationship, nor does it create an environment where healthy learning can take place.

Rather, a pet repeatedly subjected to aversive stimulation, shock, may go into a state of "shut down," or a global suppression of behavior.

This is frequently mistaken for a "trained" dog, as the dog may remain subdued and offer few or no behaviors.

In extreme cases, pets may refuse to perform any behavior at all, known as "learned helplessness."

In such cases, animals may try to isolate themselves to avoid incurring the aversive stimulation.

This is evidently counterproductive to training new, more acceptable behaviors. (O'Heare, 2011).

Some common problems resulting from the use of electronic stimulation devices include, but are not limited to:

Infliction of stress and pain.

Even at the lowest setting, electronic stimulation devices present an unknown stimulus to dogs which is, at best, neutral and, at worse, frightening and/or painful.

In many instances the shock is completely unpredictable for the dog, who does not know when or why it is coming.

This can only add to overall levels of fear and stress.

Pets conform under the shock stimulus in order to escape or avoid the terrifying and/or painful electric shock.

Avoidance learning is very real and the threat of pain is just as capable of inducing stress, fear and emotional damage as the pain itself.

By definition this makes the stimulus aversive. *(Note: Aversive means something unpleasant or frightening that the pet seeks to avoid or escape, as opposed to a pleasant stimulus that a dog seeks out voluntarily.)*

In addition, electronic stimulation regularly causes physiological pain and psychological stress, often exhibited by vocalization, urination, defecation, fleeing, or complete shut-down.

In extreme cases, electronic stimulation devices have also been known to cause muscle contraction and respiratory and cardiac paralysis (Overall, 2013).

Global suppression or "Shut-Down"

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In extreme cases, pets may refuse to perform any behavior at all, known as "learned helplessness."

In such cases, pets may try to isolate themselves to avoid incurring the aversive stimulation.

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Generalization.

For new, more appropriate behaviors to become reliable in random environments, they must be accessed, reinforced and then practiced so a dog is able to transfer them to any context or situation (known as "generalization").

When using shock to train or manage a dog, the pet must be repeatedly subjected to the aversive stimulus for the behavior to appear resolved, when it is, in fact, only suppressed.

In such cases, the dog still has not learned a more appropriate alternative behavior.

In addition, as the pet is most likely still experiencing a negative emotional state, such as fear or anxiety, he is susceptible to even more problematic behavior fallout.

Escalation.

If a change in behavior is not seen immediately, users of aversive tools and those inexperienced in behavior fallout often opt to increase the frequency, duration or intensity of the application.

Unfortunately, this can only result in the pet attempting to escape or avoid the stimulus with even greater intensity, thus often compounding or exaggerating the problem behavior for which the shock was applied to resolve.

This creates a counterproductive paradigm whereby the pet simply learns to fear the stimulus, the context, and/or the person delivering it. In addition, some dogs tend to be "stoic" and may fail to show any kind of fear response, irrespective of increased levels of anxiety or frustration.

There is also the risk that dogs may become habituated to the sense of fear or anxiety, once again causing the trainer or owner to increase the level and/or frequency of the aversive stimulus.

It has been scientifically proven that fear and stress caused in such situations can have a significant effect on a dog's well-being due to increasing cortisol levels and heart rate, not to mention the psychological impact (O'Heare, 2005).

Redirected Aggression.

Pets subjected to repeated aversive stimulation may be respondently conditioned to associate the fear and/or pain with certain contextual cues in their environment.

As an example, using an aversive sound such as an air horn to interrupt barking risks pairing the owner or trainer with the unpleasant stimulus and, in particular, the hand or arm that is reaching out while using the tool.

Repeated instances may generalize to the dog attempting to flee.

If the dog feels, however, that flight is not possible or a safe or reliable course of action, he may instead start acting aggressively toward any arm or hand movement, or any approach behavior whatsoever.

O’Heare (2007) discusses that “shock can create significant levels of frustration and reduce the dog’s bite threshold.”

O’Heare cites a study by Polsky (2000) where data implies that electric shock containment fencing elicits redirected aggression in dogs with no aggressive history.

Suppressed Aggression.

The use of aversive stimuli is counterindicated in pets with aggression. This is because the behavior may only be suppressed rather than extinguished, and may thus resurface at any time without warning, generally in a more severe display.

Using aversive stimuli to reduce behaviors, such as barking, lunging and growling may suppress signals that warn of a more serious, and potentially imminent behavior, such as biting.

Without ritualized aggression behaviors, people and other dogs will receive no warning before the dog subjected to punishment feels forced to resort to biting.

Desensitization and counterconditioning are the only ethical and effective paradigms in which to treat aggression in dogs.

Protocols such as these help positively impact the dog’s emotional state from one of fear and/or anxiety to one that is more happy and relaxed, and thus able to learn new behaviors.

Best practice.

a) Transparency and consumer advocacy.

Many shock collar trainers market themselves under verbiage and marketing slogans such as “force-free,” “positive relationship,” “natural methods,” “relationship building,” “positive only,” “no food necessary,” and so on.

These are all taglines that are bandied around the industry, but mislead unsuspecting owners looking for humane ways to train their dogs.

They are carefully crafted to appeal to dog guardians who may not always understand the various training methods available, or the fallout and unintended consequences of making the wrong choice.

They thus do not provide consumers the autonomy to make ethical decisions on behalf of their dogs.

This, compounded with the inability of a pet to offer informed consent, further questions the ethics of such training practices.

The foundation of anyone working in behavioral sciences must always be to do no harm, and, wherever possible "practitioners should base their choices of training methods on scientific data." (Ziv, 2017).

b) Scientific training methods: "Do No Harm" must become aligned with "Do Good"

All animals are motivated by food.

Food is necessary for survival.

It is therefore a powerful primary reinforcer and a critical component when used correctly as part of a strategic training or management plan.

For behavior consultants who engage in behavior change programs where it is necessary to change a pet's emotional reaction to a problematic stimulus, food is essential.

When modifying observable behaviors such as growling, lunging and biting that are often manifestations of a fearful and/or anxious emotional state, the goal must be to change the underlying emotional response, thus enabling the dog to learn a new, more appropriate behavior.

It is frequently misunderstood that fear is an emotion and not a behavior.

One cannot simply "train it out."

Indeed, fear is often the underlying emotional state to aggressive behavior, and requires the implementation of a different set of scientific protocols and a greater understanding of emotional learning and animal behavior.

A review of the scientific literature recommends the use of food as a reinforcer in desensitization and counterconditioning protocols that are specifically aimed at addressing the underlying emotions of fear and/or anxiety.

In reality, using food to counter condition emotional responses is the most widely accepted method for treating fear-based behaviors (Overall, 2013).

c) Humane Hierarchy.

A common trend across professional animal training and behavior associations is the promotion and application of a so-called humane hierarchy, and there are several versions available.

Hierarchy principal – nature's own key animal behavior and training methods, and deem it acceptable to move up through the hierarchy when working with owners and their dogs.

Some humane hierarchy models are accompanied by pages of explanation, detail and academic citations, while others are wonderfully graphic and detail each level.

Levels generally start using management strategies and antecedent control moving then to positive reinforcement, i.e. rewarding a desirable behavior to increase the likelihood of that behavior being repeated, and eventually build up to positive punishment (which would include electric shock) to stop an undesirable behavior via the use of force or pain or any other aversive (to the animal) means.

Trainers are encouraged to work within the guidelines of these hierarchies as a tool to utilize when initiating training and behavior change programs.

O'Heare (2014) presents that the least intrusive effective behavior intervention (LIEBI) model is "proposed as a 'best practice,' because of its careful attention to ethical responsibility...

Considerately working through the process of finding the least intrusive effective intervention is a wise choice, partly because it avoids excess side effects associated with highly intrusive methods.

" However, if so-called humane hierarchies work in isolation from any non-negotiable best practices or ethical guidelines, ultimately they fail the dog, the owner.

Progressing up the hierarchy to more invasive and aversive protocols is merely a matter of time for individuals who are not proficient in their craft, or do not have the requisite scientific knowledge or education to understand why this strategy is so problematic in the first place.

Some trainers simply skip through the levels, preferring to commence their training programs using the most aversive and invasive tools at hand.

Conclusion.

It is important not be fooled by deceptive marketing terms (e.g. vibrating, e-touch, stimulation, tingle, static) for shock collars.

The primary reason shock collars are effective in stopping behavior is because they are painful, and it is time for dog professionals to stop inflicting pain masquerading as training, and take shock off the table once and for all.

Rather, by focusing on education and advocacy to ensure a better-informed pet owner who seeks out humane alternatives, consumer demand would automatically be reduced, and real progress could be made in reaching the end goal.

Ziv (2017) notes that there is "no evidence to suggest that aversive training methods are more effective than reward based training methods" and that, in fact, studies suggest "the opposite might be true – in both dogs and working dogs."

Ziv (2017) suggests a new line of research to "examine how humane, reward-based methods can be improved in order to facilitate better communication between humans and dogs.

In turn, such outcomes will allow dogs to modulate their stress, and at the same time improve their ability to effectively understand and respond to the behavior displayed towards them.”

Knowing that using fear or physical punishment in the name of training or care of our dogs is ineffective and potentially harmful (in some cases, lethal).

However, there is a third reason to advocate against the use of physical punishment, and that is a moral one.

Most pet owners, if asked, would most likely say they do not punish their dogs, or deliberately place them in frightening situations to try to encourage new, or more appropriate behaviors.

Yet the same owners will unwittingly take advice from training professionals who practice “methods” such as hitting, shocking and physically correcting a dog using a leash, or an array of aversive tools.

By using different terminology, a professional may feel justified in physically punishing a dog while dispensing corresponding advice to dog owners, without acknowledging that he/she is, in fact, damaging the dog’s physical and mental well-being.

In civilized society, it is generally agreed that physical behavior is not an effective or acceptable way for adults to resolve their differences.

Bearing this in mind, it should come as no surprise that physically correcting dogs, like hitting children or adults, causes more problems than it solves, such as the many outlined above.

It is time to stop physically harming our pets in the name of training. By working together, professional animal training and behavior associations have the ability to achieve this, and successfully reach the ultimate goal, which must be to *do no harm* to the animals in our charge, and improve the welfare of dogs all over the world.

**For the purposes of this document, electronic stimulation devices include --but are not limited to -- products often referred to as e-collars, training collars, shock collars, e-touch, stimulation, tingle, TENS unit collar, remote trainers, and e-prods.*

The Importance of Puppy Socialization

Effective animal training lays the foundation for an animal's healthy socialization and training and helps prevent behavior problems. Ensure dog animals live in nurturing and stable environments to better prevent behavior problems.

Consistent with this effort proper puppy socialization be addressed as vital to a dog's development with an ideal socialization period starting at four weeks of age and continuing through four months of age. This is considered to be the critical socialization period for dogs. Socialization is to accompany puppy vaccinations rather than waiting to socialize a puppy until after the vaccinations are complete by which time the critical socialization period will have been missed. Puppies can start puppy socialization classes as early as 7-8 weeks of age. Puppies should receive a minimum of one set of vaccines at least 7 days prior to the first class and a first deworming. They should be kept up-to-date on vaccines throughout the class."

Problems associated with improper or absent puppy socialization. The puppy socialization period (4 to 16 weeks) is the most critical period for influencing a dog's temperament, character, behavior and avoiding problems. Preventing potential problems is far more effective than trying to correct issues when the dog is older.

Problems and undesirable behaviors resulting from the lack of proper puppy socialization can be anything from inappropriate barking, chewing, separation anxiety and aggression to general reactivity. Improper or misguided efforts to socialize a puppy can result in a host of fears, predictable and unpredictable.

Proper socialization will also greatly increase a dog's reliability making it easier to handle, train and examine while greatly reducing the risk of a dog biting.

Conclusion.

It is the position of the PPG that all puppy socialization be conducted comprehensively and in a manner which encourages the confidence of the puppy and that puppy classes focus on the use of behaviorism with an emphasis on positive reinforcement.

Ideally the socialization process should start with early neurological stimulation and end with daily exposure to novel stimuli by raising puppies in homes that provide a busy and intermittently noisy environment with significant variety of interactions that stimulate all 5 senses.

Socialization should include gently exposing a puppy to new people and other safe vaccinated healthy dogs on a daily basis with numerous sights, sounds smells and textures (pavement, grass, sand, gravel, etc.) including children of various ages.

Puppy Socialization should always be a fun process that is always free of any force.

Recommended reading.

The PPG website page on puppy education [read more](#)

The ASPCA article on Socializing Your Puppy, [read more](#)

AVSAB Position Statement on Puppy Socialization, [read more](#)

Articles

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Dominance Theory in Animal Training.

The dominance theory is an obsolete and aversive method of interacting with animals that has at its foundation incorrect and misinterpreted data which can result in damage to the animal-human relationship and cause behavioral problems in the animal.

For effective animal training procedures focused on the use of behaviorism, the natural science of behavior which emphasizes natural science assumptions and avoids speculation and theoretical constructs for explaining behavior.

Behaviorism has two main branches:

Experimental analysis of behavior, which identifies basic principles of behavior, and applied behavior analysis, which applies basic principles of behavior to changing problem behaviors in real-life settings.

The general dog-owning public should be educated by organizations and associations on dominance theory and the many problems it can create for animals.

Definition.

Dominance theory, or "social dominance" as an ethological construct describing features of a social relationship, - addresses the management of social conflict including but not limited to the allocation of limited resources- through the exertion of control and influence.

This takes place in a way that minimizes the risk of overt aggression by the use of conventionalized ritual display behaviors.

This minimization of risk involves a cost-benefit evaluation of the benefits of seeking to win a particular social conflict versus the likely associated cost of losing the conflict (O'Heare, 2004).

This definition describes only interactions between beings of the same species; - it is never used in science to describe or label inter-species interactions.

Instead, the American Society of Veterinary Animal Behaviorists notes in its 2008 position statement against the use of dominance theory in the behavior modification of animals, "most undesirable behaviors in our dogs are not related to priority access to resources; rather, they are due to accidental rewarding of the undesirable behavior." (AVSAB 2008).

Foundations of dominance theory in animal training.

The idea that humans should exert physical control over animals was first widely-popularized in the 1970s in the book "How To Be Your Dog's Best Friend" by the Monks of New Skete, which recommended the "alpha roll" to deal with undesired behaviors.

The alpha roll, in which a human flips a dog onto its back and pins it until it showed submissive behaviors, was founded on 1960s studies of captive wolves kept in an area too small for their numbers and composed of members that wouldn't be found together in a pack in the wild.

These conditions resulted in increased numbers of conflicts in which one wolf would appear to pin another wolf.

However, current scientific knowledge have recanted the findings of these studies, acknowledging that this behavior is not typical of wolves living in the wild. (Mech, 1999).

Despite these findings and the great disparity in behavior between wolves and dogs, dominance theory became popularized and remains a widely-propagated training style for pet dogs.

Application of dominance to the human-animal relationship.

Ethologists agree that while dominance theory does not describe interactions between different species, it is frequently applied to animal training in a way that promotes adversarial relationships between the animal and human.

The term is often used to label an animal's counter-control behaviors, often as a result of aversive stimulation and coercion.

In short, dominance theory is a counterproductive construct that distracts from the functional relationship between behavior, and the environment, which actually causes and explains behaviors. (O'Heare)

Conclusion.

All training to be conducted in a manner which encourages animals and focuses on the use of behaviorism.

Rather use functional analysis to identify and resolve problem behaviors.

Further eschew the improper use of the term "dominance" and all training methods employing dominance theory.

Articles.

Using 'Dominance' To Explain Dog Behavior Is Old Hat, Science Daily. [Click here](#) to read the article.

Canine Dominance: Is the Concept of the Alpha Dog Valid?

Current research challenges the idea of the alpha dog.

Published on July 20, 2010 by Stanley Coren, Ph.D., F.R.S.C. in Canine Corner [Click here](#).

The Dominance Controversy, Dr. Sophia Yin. [Click here](#) to read the full article.

Scientific articles.

The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) Position Statement on The Use of Dominance Theory in Behavior Modification of Animals. [Click here](#) to read the full statement

Steinker, A. (2007). Social–Psychological Dynamics in Dog Training: The Power of Authority and Social Role Designation and its Possible Effects on Dog Training. *Journal of Applied Companion Animal Behavior*, 1(1), 7-14. [Click here](#) to purchase this article.

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John W.S., Bradshaw , Emily J., Blackwell , Rachel A., Casey. Dominance in domestic dogs -- useful construct or bad habit? *Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research*, May/June 2009, Pages 135-144 [Click here for the abstract](#).

L. David Mech (1999) (PDF). Alpha status, dominance, and division of labor in wolf packs. [Click here](#) to access this article.

Educational videos.

Dr. L. David Mech talks about the terms "alpha" and "beta" wolves and why they are no longer scientifically accurate.

The Use of Pet Correction Devices.

Dogs have an intrinsic right to be treated humanely, to have each of their individual needs met, and to live in safe, enriched environments free from force, pain and fear.

Effective training and care procedures form the foundation for a dog's healthy socialization, and help prevent behavior problems.

As such, the general pet-owning public needs to know to ensure their pets live in nurturing and stable environments, and that only non-aversive training and pet care equipment is used.

In this cyber-driven world, where information may not always be accurate or scientifically sound.

Definition of force-free.

Force-free means that methods involving shock, pain, choking, fear, and/or physical compulsion are never used to manage, care for or train pets.

Non-negotiable equipment.

Certain equipment are non-negotiable - Devices used to choke, prong, and/or shock pets constitutes an infringement of these principles.

Equipment specifically for dog training, daily management and care. No "dog correction devices" or aversive stimuli intended for pet care, management, or training by eliciting a "startle response," and/or an alarm reaction to prevent, barking, jumping up, growling or any other problematic behavior.

Ramirez-Moreno and Sejnowski (2012) define the startle response as a "largely unconscious defensive response to sudden or threatening stimuli, such as sudden noise or sharp movement" that is "associated with negative affect."

According to Lang, Bradley, and Cuthbert (1990), the startle response (or aversive reflex) is "enhanced during a fear state and is diminished in a pleasant emotional context."

The use of the startle response to be a management technique that uses fear as the motivation.

Direct consequences can include:

1. Infliction of stress and pain.

Any stimulus not paired with a positive stimulus is, at best, neutral and, at worst, frightening and/or painful to the dog.

Pets who learn to exhibit behaviors to escape or avoid fear or pain are by definition being subjected to an aversive stimulus. (Aversive means something unpleasant or frightening that the dog seeks to avoid or escape, as opposed to a pleasant stimulus that a dog seeks out voluntarily.)

2. Escalation.

If a change in behavior is not seen immediately, users of aversive tools may opt to increase the frequency, duration or intensity of the application.

Unfortunately, this can only result in the dog attempting to escape or avoid the stimulus with even greater intensity.

This creates a counterproductive paradigm whereby the dog simply learns to fear the stimulus, the context, and/or the person delivering it. In addition, some dogs tend to be "stoic" and may fail to show any kind of fear response, irrespective of increased levels of anxiety or frustration.

There is also the risk that pets may become habituated to the sense of fear or anxiety, once again causing the trainer or owner to increase the level and/or frequency of the aversive stimulus.

It has been scientifically proven that fear and stress caused in such situations can have a significant effect on a pet's well-being due to increasing cortisol levels and heart rate, not to mention the psychological impact. (O'Heare, 2005).

3. Global suppression, or "Shut-Down".

A pet repeatedly subjected to aversive stimulation may go into a state of "shut down," or a global suppression of behavior.

This is frequently mistaken for a “trained” dog, as the dog remains subdued and offers few or no behaviors.

In extreme cases, dogs may refuse to perform any behavior at all, known as “learned helplessness.”

In such cases, pets may try to isolate themselves to avoid incurring the aversive stimulation.

This is evidently counterproductive to training new, more acceptable behaviors. (O’Heare, 2011).

4. Suppressed aggression.

The use of aversive stimuli is counter-indicated in dogs with aggression. This is because the behavior may only be suppressed rather than extinguished, and may thus resurface at any time without warning, generally in a more severe display.

Using aversive stimuli to reduce behaviors such as barking, lunging and growling may suppress signals that warn of a more serious, and potentially imminent behavior, such as biting.

Without ritualized aggression behaviors, people and other pets will receive no warning before the dog subjected to punishment feels forced to resort to biting.

Desensitization and counterconditioning are the only ethical and effective paradigms in which to treat aggression in dogs.

Protocols such as these help positively impact the dog’s emotional state from one of fear and/or anxiety to one that is more happy and relaxed, and thus able to learn new behaviors.

5. Redirected aggression.

Pets subjected to repeated aversive stimulation may be despondently conditioned to associate the fear and/or pain with certain contextual cues in their environment.

As an example, using an aversive sound such as an air horn to interrupt barking risks pairing the owner or trainer with the unpleasant stimulus and, in particular, the hand or arm that is reaching out while using the tool.

Repeated instances may generalize to the pet attempting to flee.

If the dog feels, however, that flight is not possible or a safe or reliable course of action, he may instead start acting aggressively toward any arm or hand movement, or approach behavior whatsoever.

6. Generalization.

For new, more appropriate behaviors to become reliable in random environments, they must be accessed, reinforced and then practiced so a dog is able to transfer them to any context or situation (known as "generalization").

When using so-called pet correction devices or aversive stimuli to train or manage a dog, the pet must be repeatedly subjected to the aversive stimulus for the behavior to appear resolved, when it is in fact only suppressed.

In such cases, the dog still has not learned a more appropriate alternative behavior.

In addition, as the pet is most likely still experiencing a negative emotional state, such as fear or anxiety, he is susceptible to even more problematic behavior fallout.

The force-free method.

Best to use of positive operant and respondent training methods, both personally and professionally, and holds that all training should be conducted in a manner that encourages dogs to enjoy the process, which will, in turn, lead them to become more confident and well-adjusted dogs.

Then optimize the use of applied behavior analysis to systematically identify and resolve problem behaviors using the least aversive and intrusive methods, tools and equipment.

The use of any training tools and equipment whose purpose and/or intent is to interrupt or redirect behavior using fear, force or pain is not recommended.

Understandable that no definition can be so expansive and explicit that every possible situation is addressed.

This applies universally, perhaps most in the Justice system where very often courts cannot agree on a single interpretation of what terms and definitions mean, including physical force.

Therefore the considers, both in the context of its Guiding Principles and as a general framework, physical force to mean any intentional physical act against a dog that causes psychological or physical pain, harm or damage.

Conclusion.

The use of pain, force or fear to modify behavior, train, manage or care for dogs is completely unnecessary.

Nor is it in the best interest of pets and their owners or trainers for the reasons detailed above.

Rather, a constructional approach where more appropriate and acceptable behaviors are encouraged and reinforced via positive training protocols is highly recommended.