

**Public Petitions Clerks  
Room T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP**

19 May 2015

**CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1555 (Electric Shock and Vibration Collars for Animals)**

The Scottish SPCA welcomes the invitation of the Scottish Government Public Petitions Committee to comment on Petition PE1555 on Electric Shock and Vibration Collars for Animals as lodged by Siobhan Garrahy.

As I am sure the Committee is aware, this is not a new issue, the Scottish SPCA first raised this with the UK Government in 2001 and the subject has also been a topic for the Scottish Parliaments All Party Group on Animal Welfare.

Following an incident in Essex in 1999 (which was not related to electric collars), the Home Office ordered a review of dog training and handling for both Police and Military dogs.

This review concluded that electric collars would no longer be available for Police or Military dog handlers; this instruction was subsequently adopted by ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) and ACPO'S (Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland). As such no Police or Military dog handler has been able to use such a device since the year 2000.

Police and Military dog handlers are licenced by the Home Office and are thoroughly trained and regularly monitored and assessed. The view put forward to the Home Office by the Scottish SPCA in 2001, is that if the highest trained, most scrutinised dog handlers are banned from using electric collars, then they should not be made available to the general public.

The Scottish SPCA has an average of 3000 – 3500 dogs per year going through our Animal Rescue and Rehoming Centres; these consist of practically every breed of dog with the entire range of temperaments. The Scottish SPCA does not use electric collars on any dog, but rehabilitates dogs through positive reward based training.

Other organisations in Scotland that care, handle and train a large number of dogs are the Dogs Trust and Guide Dogs for the Blind, neither organisation uses electric collars.



There are other remote collars that do not subject dogs to an electric shock but emit a citronella odour which can also be used to control certain behaviours or focus the attention of the dog.

Obviously collars that simply vibrate do not raise the same concern as collars that can inflict an electric shock.

Some gundog users are known to use them in the early stages of field training, mainly to keep the attention of the dog.

There have been many papers written over the years on electric collars and invisible fences, many have contradicting views, however, the Scottish SPCA firmly believes that the use of an electric collar that inflicts an electric shock is a very lazy way of trying to obtain quick results instead of proper reward and praise based training.

There is a wide range of animal trainer / behaviourists available to the public, and while there are associations and member groups, there is no enforceable national standard for such individuals and in effect, anyone could advertise themselves as an animal behaviourist.

There are many reputable trainer / behaviourists who are willing to take the time to train or advise an owner appropriately, however, there are some who advocate the use of electric collars that inflict an electric shock; these people should not be recommended to the public.

Currently, electric shock collars that inflict and electric shock are more readily available than ever before. A quick internet search will show that these devices are readily available with next day delivery with prices starting as low as £16.95; the variation in power levels is also quite alarming.

Even when used in accordance with any guidelines given, there is no guarantee that the dog will associate the shock with the behaviour that the owner / trainer wishes to modify.

Being hand held remote devices they are also capable of being misused to continuously punish a dog.

The Scottish SPCA is of the opinion that these collars should not be used by the public and the Scottish SPCA believes that the, use, advertising and sale of these devices should be illegal, which given the proliferation of internet sales would be difficult.

The Scottish SPCA has no reason to believe that there would ever be a veterinary reason for using such a device.

The Scottish SPCA is aware that the devices have been used in an attempt to control a range of behaviours from barking, running off or aggression to other dogs or livestock; however, as previously stated a dog will not always associated the shock with the behaviour which in itself can lead to other problems with the dog.

With regard to aggression towards people, dogs or livestock, there is already a legal requirement for an owner or person in charge to have proper control of an animal in their care.

Below is an excerpt from the stated Scottish SPCA Policy.

6.13. No device that can inflict pain on an animal, from which it has no means of escape, should be used as a means of training or control or offered for sale.

6.14. Training aids must be part of a structured training programme and this should be made clear on accompanying literature and at the point of sale.

6.15. Electric shock collars and invisible fencing should not be used.

Yours sincerely

Michael Flynn MBE  
Chief Superintendent