

SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS



21 September 2016

Ms Liaw Wy-Cin
The editor
Forum Page
The Straits Times

Dear Ms Liaw,

I refer to the article “Dog-zapping device raises howls of protest” (S.T. 16 September).

Garmin’s newly launched Delta Smart device, reportedly tracks the time your dog spends exercising. Garmin claims that the product also has the ability to ‘reduce or eliminate unwanted behaviour’ through inflicting a shock to your pet. To justify this regrettable selling point, Garmin declares, “Dogs weren’t born with manners” – well neither were humans, but we would abhor the use of an electric shock on a child. Similarly we should reject such a cruel act on our four-legged companions.

Shock collars, often referred to as e-collars, emit varying intensities of electric shocks in an attempt to curb a dog’s unwanted behaviour. Due to the stress, fear and pain that is inflicted on the animal, some jurisdictions have banned the use of this cruel training tool, and Singapore should too. Published studies have shown the negative effects of using electric shocks to train dogs. In one study, dogs that had been previously shocked were observed exhibiting signs of fear and stress around their handler, even when the e-collar was not in use. The negative emotional states that are brought about by the use of aversive training methods inhibit the animal’s ability to learn. As learning is the key objective of training, the use of e-collars can be counterproductive.

The SPCA advocates more humane ways to train an animal, by using force free and evidence based methods focusing on positive reinforcement. This creates a safe and nurturing environment for a pet to learn, and will help build a close and lasting bond between the animal and human, a relationship based on trust and love.

Lastly, the SPCA advises owners to choose trainers and methods that protect their dog’s welfare, while staying away from aversive and harmful training methods that inflict unnecessary pain and stress.

Yours sincerely,

Jaipal Singh Gill (Dr)
Executive Director
Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals