

## **Prong Collars: What's Wrong with Them?**

© 2009 Alana Stevenson

As a professional certified and veterinary referred dog behaviorist and dog trainer, I do not use prong, pinch, or spiked collars on dogs for any purpose, nor do I recommend them. The use of pinch, prong, and spiked collars is inhumane, causes pain when there is never a need for aversive training, makes aggressive dogs more reactive, and fearful dogs more anxious. In addition, using a pinch collar on a dog teaches the dog to fear the handler, have an aversion to the collar, exacerbates aggression due to negative association learning, can cause redirected biting and redirected aggression, and ensures virtually no off-leash control.

The use of prong collars on dogs hinders the ability for dog owners to learn how to interact with animals in a positive way, and fails to teach dog owners how to teach their dogs in a humane and caring manner. Instead, owners will tug or yank on the dogs' necks hoping for a perceived outcome or result. A dog has no idea what a jerk or yank on his or her neck means. It is simply painful. People using these collars fail to teach a dog how to look to them for guidance or how to make eye-contact with them, nor do they reward a dog for staying next to them. If the dog fails to comply on a prong collar, the user of the collar will jerk or yank harder hoping for a different result. In other words, they follow the motto, "If the dog doesn't understand you or won't listen, hurt em."

Pinch, prong, and spiked collars can puncture the trachea and esophagus. Pressure around the neck caused by pinch collars and yanking can cause intraocular pressure causing damaging effects to the eyes, ocular disease, and glaucoma. Pinch collars cause bleeding, and routinely call bruising. Pet owners and trainers who use these collars do not shave dogs' necks to see the damage they do to a dog's skin.

Pinch collars are punitive and outdated. Using such collars on former shelter or rescue animals, especially, who already have had inconsistent, neglectful and/or punitive experiences and interactions with people, is inhumane and inappropriate.

I recommend the use of fabric collars, harnesses, Sof-Touch Training Safety Leashes, front clip harnesses, or head halters to work with dogs, especially for reactive or aggressive dogs. There is never any reason to use pinch, prong, or spiked collars on dogs. The heavy use of prong collars will have detrimental side effects for dogs that are usually life-long. Putting these collars in the hands of owners creates a vicious cycle. It leads to an unnecessary and ongoing infliction of punishment that usually leads to behavioral problems, which then leads to dogs being dumped at shelters. In virtually every aggression case I consult on, punitive training methods, including pinch collars, were used on dogs and recommended by trainers. The only positive solution is to get rid of these collars and to teach dogs in a positive way and use harnesses instead.