

WHAT IS A 'PRONG' OR 'PINCH' COLLAR?

The prong collar is constructed using a series of special open chain links clipped together that have pronged ends pointed inwards to press against the dog's neck. A slip chain is connected to each side of the prong collar to hold it together.



This photo shows the links attached with the prongs pointed inwards. The slip (choke) chain holds the pronged links in place.

To be most effective, the collar is fitted just under the dog's jawline, the most sensitive part of the animal's neck. To keep the collar in this position, it would need to be fitted tightly.



The individual links can be seen in this photo. The prongs can be covered with 'caps' to lessen the stabbing effect.

HOW IS A 'PRONG' OR 'PINCH' COLLAR USED?

Once the collar is placed on the dog, the handler will 'pop' or pull on the leash, causing the slip chain to tighten, much like a choke chain. This action forces the collar's prongs into the neck of the dog to 'correct' the dog if it displays undesired behaviour. (Halgren 2011)



When pressure is applied to the leash, it cuts off the dog's air supply and pushes the prongs around the circumference of the dog's neck.



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SPCAs

PRONG COLLARS

NECKLACED CRUELTY

'PRONGED COLLAR' MYTHS

- **The collars are 'humane' training tools.** Trainers who use these tools reassure their clients that the collars do not hurt. This is a myth. *The reason this collar works is because it inflicts pain and discomfort on the dog. This is referred to as a Positive Punisher, which is the addition of a punisher to stop a behaviour. (Bekoff 2019)*
- **The prong collar works like the mother dog restraining her pup.** *This is a myth; a mother dog will never control pups in this way. She may gently restrain a pup with her mouth, but no pressure is applied. We are yet to find any scientific documentation to back up this myth. (Herron et al, 2009)*
- **Prong/pinch collars spread the tension evenly all the way around the dog's neck, instead of directly on the throat.** *The collar is NOT less damaging or less cruel than check/choke chain, and the pain is still distributed around the entire circumference of the neck.*
- **Owners of aggressive dogs are told that the prong collar is the best way to control the dog and prevent it from being euthanised.** *Most of the aggression in dogs is based in fear. Punishing a fearful/reactive dog is not going to improve their confidence or motivation. These dogs need confidence and love, not pain and punishment! (Todd, 2018).*
- **Prong collars work to 'stop' undesired behaviour while walking on a leash.** *Most dogs who are trained using a prong collar, end up wearing them for walks, or training for the rest of their lives – which means that the device does NOT 'stop' a behaviour, or it would not need to be applied more than once.*

10 REASONS NOT TO USE PRONG COLLARS

1. Prong collars are painful and inhumane.
 2. Prong collars suppress behaviour, but don't change it. The suppression of instinctual behaviours can lead to learned helplessness, aggression, and physical issues. Train your dog what to do (e.g.; calmly walk next to you), instead of using pain and fear to tell him what not to do.
 3. There are more humane alternatives. Front-attachment harnesses are a better, safer and more humane choice.
 4. If you love your dog, you won't want to cause him/her pain and discomfort.
 5. Prong collars create negative associations. Anything that is present in the environment when your dog experiences the pain of a prong collar can take on a negative association, including other dogs, children and strangers. Negative Association makes dogs more reactive, and more likely to lunge toward or be fearful of triggers.
- Under their fur, the skin on dogs' necks is significantly thinner than human skin. Although sudden sharp pain may provide a quick behaviour fix in the moment, the effects are usually short-lived.**
6. Prong collars build fear which will damage the relationship with your dog. Wouldn't you rather have your dog trust and feel safe with you?
 7. Prong collars can result in negative side effects such as depression, disempowerment, aggression, and more.
 8. Responsible owners make choices based on science, and proven facts about canine learning and communication to interact with their dogs through positive reinforcement. It's more effective, more humane, and more fun!
 9. The prong collar is illegal in New Zealand, Austria, Australia, Switzerland, Sweden, and many others. Let's join this trend!
 10. They are simply NOT necessary; there are better ways to train. Train with your brain, not with pain!

WHAT INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR & VETERINARY SPECIALISTS SAY

A statement issued by the Pet Professional Guild – an international organisation for science-based training and behaviour specialists:

“It is the position of the Pet Professional Guild (PPG) that 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.

Studies and the experience of the PPG’s membership find that training and behaviour 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 slow the training process, add to the animal’s stress, and can result in both short-term and long-term psychological damage to animals.

Conclusion. *It is the position of the PPG that all training should be conducted in a manner that encourages animals to enjoy training and become more confident and well-adjusted pets.*

In addition, PPG members optimize the use of functional analysis to identify and resolve problem behaviours where choke and prong collars are typically used such as leash-pulling and lunging. All PPG members should encourage and use positive operant and respondent training methods, both personally and professionally.

Further, the PPG and its members 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.”

Notable veterinarian, Dr Karen Overall, VMD, Ph.D. Diplomate American Society of Veterinary Behaviourists offers the following guidance – “Prong collars can do incredible damage to the dog’s neck since, if pressure is applied, they can become embedded in the skin.

Prong collars do not work the way people think they do, and there are better tools and understandings for accomplishing what people who use these seek to accomplish.

These collars, if sharpened – as is often the case – are specifically intended to use pain to encourage the dog to focus on the handler.

For aggressive dogs, this uniform pressure response can worsen their aggression when accompanied by pain. For fearful or reactive-aggressive dogs, this response cannot only worsen their aggression but it can endanger the client.”

Dr. Karen Overall, VMD, Ph.D., Diplomate ACVB



A close inspection shows how the chain is designed to push the prongs into the dog’s neck when pressure is applied.

Psychological and Behavioural Effects:

Dr. Soraya V. Juarbe-Diaz states that “Using punishment to stop behaviours is not new. Notice I say ‘stop’ rather than ‘teach’ – I can stop any behaviour, but I am more interested in teaching my students, animal or human, to choose the behaviour I want them to perform because they can trust me, because I do not hurt them and they are safe with me, and because the outcome is something they enjoy”.

Dr Soraya V. Juarbe-Diaz. DVM, DACVB, CAAB

THYROID INFORMATION

Prong collars can easily injure the delicate butterfly-shaped thyroid gland, that sits just below the larynx and in front of the trachea.

These collars can also injure the salivary glands and salivary lymph nodes on the side of the face underneath both ears.

Dr. Jean Dodds. (Respected veterinarian and thyroid expert).

Documented Injuries To Dogs:

There are many documented cases of injuries to dogs caused using prong collars. These injuries include but are not limited to: -

- Soft tissue damage
- Eye problems
- Strangulation (in some cases leading to death)
- Tracheal/oesophageal damage
- Neurological problems
- Orthopaedic issues, neck and spinal injuries from whiplash

Many vets have treated such injuries and are aware of resulting deaths directly linked to their use.

An important point to consider:

Studies have shown that a handler has less than 2 seconds for a dog to link the handler’s action to a behaviour being performed. This is a short window of opportunity to correct the dog’s behaviour that many professional trainers would struggle to comply with.

Generally, most dogs are ‘corrected’ after the fact’. This means that the ‘punishment’ of the prong collar is not applied to undesired behaviour. As a result, the dog might be punished for a wanted behaviour, like coming when called.

At this stage it ceases to be a punisher, or a way to ‘redirect’ unwanted behaviour – it is

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