

E-Collars

Shock collar, E-collar, and electronic training collar are some of the names used for this piece of equipment. What it actually is, though, is a transmitter and a receiver attached to a dog's neck area. It is designed as a device to stimulate, get attention or shock, if you will, a dog that is standing next to you or is 1 mile away.

The E-collar was first for sale about 30 years ago, though I'm sure people were experimenting with prototypes way before that time. The original collar was definitely a shock collar; it had one setting- full bore. The first collars were used by houndsmen for breaking their dogs from chasing off game such as deer and fox. They would put the dog on a very hot track so that the dog would open or bark while chasing the game. The dog could then be shocked as it was running by the hunter. These harsh methods worked on some dogs; the others got the harshest treatment, and they were shot. Hunting/training methods and practices have changed dramatically. And so have the electronic training collars that are used by sportsmen today. Here we are in the year 2001 and we now have a collar that is smaller, more powerful (when necessary) and which has the ability to nick a dog, a very slight correction all at a price that every dog owner can afford.

As a pro trainer it takes much less time to train a dog and the results are consistent with the use of the new E-collars. No, you don't have to have an E-collar to train a dog. I have talked with many people about this. One in particular, a medical doctor said, "I would rather do things the old fashioned way." I can only say that I hope he doesn't practice medicine the old fashioned way. There are many misconceptions about the use of the E-collar. Some think that it is cruel; others feel that you can ruin or kill a good dog. We could also do damage or kill something with a car, shotgun, or a chainsaw. With the proper training you can be as successful with your dog and the E-collar as you are with your auto, shotgun, or chainsaw.

In the past four years around 200 of our clients have purchased E-collars. None of these people dislike the collar. Do they respect it and treat it with caution? Absolutely. The electric collar gives you the safety and the control of a 300-400 yard leash or check cord. When used properly it is a safe and humane way to break a dog of dangerous habits and to train a dog to be obedient for its own protection. The collar won't ruin your dog, but improper training and misuse of the collar will.

Training with the electronic collar is not magic, though I have a friend who says it gives the dog, "instant brains." It starts with the introduction to the collar by a process called collar conditioning. The key to the success of the collar is the same as in all other training methods: consistency. Until the dog understands the commands and what is expected of him all the time, (with the exception of when the dog is crated) the collar must stay on the dog. The beauty of the E-collar is that because the correction is not made by an individual the dog does not associate the correction with any particular person; instead the dog associates the correction with the undesired activity. With consistent correction it eventually stops the activity.

Other than in training dogs for technical gun dog tasks the collar is most commonly used to train the dog to understand basic concepts such as to come when it's called and to stay off from people and things. Yes you can train your dog with extreme patience, time, and supervision without the E-collar. However, most people feel that because they let the dog out, "just this one time," without going out to supervise, or by standing in the doorway at 7:00 am they have the control to keep their dog safe. In the past year we have had ten calls from these people in this situation who have lost their dogs to car accidents. We empathize with these people as we have had the same situation right in our own driveway. This is exactly why all of

our new dogs are collar conditioned and trained as soon as it is appropriate. The thought of pushing the button on the E-collar can't compare to the heartbreak of losing your companion. The E-collar is a viable option for the average dog owner.

There are differences in models and variations in quality and price. Some makers have been in business for decades and others are more new to the industry. Just remember that you get what you pay for and like other electronic equipment, the more bells and whistles, the more things there are to break. A reasonable price for a guaranteed and sound electronic training collar is \$300.00-\$400.00.

In conclusion, the E-collar can make your pet or hunting dog an enjoyable addition to your life instead of just another thing to worry about or a pain in the neck. If you work with a reputable collar and sound training techniques the collar can be well worth your time and money. Good luck and great hunting.

John Hayes

at Kirby Mountain Sporting Dogs