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DEBUNKING MYTHS ABOUT REMOTE TRAINING COLLARS

by Joe Arterburn with Keith Benson

There are so many myths and misconceptions about remote training collars that a lot of people are hesitant to use them, robbing themselves of a valuable training tool, according to Keith Benson, general manager of Triple Crown Dog Academy, America's premier dog training, boarding and event center in Hutto, Texas.

Safe Training Devices

"Probably the most prevalent myth about remote training collars is that they are not a safe training device; that they are cruel and inhumane, and that simply is not true," Benson said. "They, as well as most types of training equipment, are very safe and very effective when used in the right manner."

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As the Wheels Turn – Dog Club Membership 101

Posted By Laura Reeves PHA

In Dogs & People Learn! The Scene

Wait! what? Join an all-breed club? Attend a meeting? Help at the show? Seriously?

Yes. Really. It's something every participant in the fancy really should do. Anyone who is not now or has not been an active member of a show-giving club, either an all-breed club or a national or regional breed club, has not earned the right to complain about shows, show sites, judges, or pretty much anything else.

I understand we're all busy. Trust me. I get it. I'm also the Hospitality Chair for my breed's National Events this year, which take place just a couple weeks before my all-breed club's show. And yes, I have a job and a couple side projects (like this column) and a family. And, even, every now and then, a life! The same goes for every active participant in the clubs to which I belong.

Certainly I'm not suggesting everyone over-commit the way I do (in fact, I strongly recommend against it!) but this sport rests on its people. I hear lots of complaining about how AKC doesn't do this or that club didn't do thus and so. Well, kids, who do you think is going to actually do the work? We are. You and me and Bobby McGee, figuratively speaking. It's called giving back to the sport. And it's not just for the long-timers. Many of us are reaching critical mass in the burnout stage. We need new voices, new brains, new eyes, new (and younger) backs. Volunteering for a club introduces participants to the inner workings of the show. It helps people learn, meet new folks in the community, contribute new ideas and fresh blood (and sweat and tears). If you just acquired your first show dog (or obedience or agility or hunt test or field trial... all the same principles apply outside of conformation) what better way to learn the ropes than by helping out? You aren't liable to be enlisted as show chair at your first meeting. Hopefully, your club leadership will listen respectfully to all input, but your ideas may not be immediately implemented. That is not reason to give up. I can

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"With a good training program and understanding of proper use, the collars become very easy to use and very effective."

And the electric stimulation applied by the collar is not the jarring, painful charge of electricity that some people imagine. Nor is it physically harmful to the dog. "It's not like a shot from electro-convulsive therapy or a wall outlet like some people think," Benson said. "In fact, the levels of stimulation we use when training dogs is like the static charge you get when you rub your feet on the carpet and then touch something," he said.

The idea is not to make the stimulation painful, but just enough to communicate with the dog, he said. "We just want it to be uncomfortable for the dog, like when you bump your elbow on a table."

You should always work your dog with the collar set at the lowest stimulation, just enough so the dog can feel it. The key, Benson said, is to set it so the stimulation produces only a curious look from the dog as though the dog is saying 'Hey, what was that?'

Of course, if distractions increase, then the stimulation level may have to increase. For instance, if a rabbit runs across the road, the dog is not likely to be paying as much attention to the trainer, Benson said. But still the stimulation level should be nudged up just enough to get the dog's attention.

The Importance of a Snug Fit

Another myth is that remote training collars can burn a dog's neck. "Not true," Benson said. "The stimulation that a collar can output from the battery that's housed inside is not high enough to physically burn even if it is set on a high level for long period of time," he said.

The collar must fit snug so that it does not rub back and forth, which could wear away hair on the dog's neck. If the collar is not clean and is rubbing into the neck then hot spots could develop and create a sore that could be mistaken for a burn, he said. Or maybe the collar was left on too long or it was too loose and an infection began to appear.

The Dog Learns How to Listen

Myth No. 3: Using a remote training collar is more stressful on the dog; that it is not as humane a training method as traditional methods of a leash and choke chain.

Again, not necessarily so, Benson said. Typically, dogs at Triple Crown are trained with collars set in a low-level continuous stimulation mode, meaning that the stimulation is being sent until the dog performs the correct behavior. "The faster he responds to the command the quicker the stimulation stops," Benson said. "Then we give the dog plenty of praise and reward." Therefore, the stimulation level has to be low so the dog is able to think and learn. "I'm teaching the dog to problem-solve, how to listen to my command and shut off the stimulation," he said.

But back to the stress myth. "I'm using an escape conditioning technique where I teach the dog to shut the collar off. Therefore, the dog is in control and goes through less stress. And he learns much faster," Benson said. "This is based on sound learning principles."

No, They Are Actually Easy To Use

Calendar of Events

JANUARY

31 FEB BOARD MEETING 7PM

FEBRUARY

4,11,18,25 TDI CLASSES 1-3 CLUBHOUSE

11 WKC MASTERS AGILITY CHAMPIONSHIP

13 WKC MASTERS OBEDIENCE CHAMPIONSHIP

13-14 WESTMINSTER KENNEL CLUB DOG SHOW

14 VALENTINE'S DAY

7 SEKC GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING CLUBHOUSE
7PM

17 SEKC AWARDS BANQUET HOLIDAY INN CITY
CENTRE

MARCH

3 SPRING AGILITY TRIAL ENTRIES OPEN

TBD BOARD MEETING 7PM

11 TDI TESTING ALL DAY CLUBHOUSE

12 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS

14 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING 7PM CLUBHOUSE

17 ST PATRICK'S DAY

APRIL

TBD BOARD MEETING 7PM

11 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING 7PM CLUBHOUSE

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Well, here we are in a New Year and I truly hope that it is a great year for everyone.

We had our first meeting of the year and I want to thank Dawn Fischer for her past service on the board. She had a great deal to contribute and I really appreciated her help. I also want to welcome Denise Erger as the new board member and Dave Nilsen, Brian Frenz and Tammie Smart as returning board members.

Coming into the New Year I have been thinking about the club and members. We are a group of volunteers that have our love for dogs in common. We all have different goals with our wonderful companions and I fear that we sometimes get so involved with our own area that we forget all of the other areas. When the club started the only two things going were conformation and obedience. Since then agility and rally have gotten very popular and then you have field trials, hunt tests, search & rescue, tracking, nose work, therapy, barn trials and I know that I am forgetting something. We don't have the numbers of people competing as we did in the past as they don't have the time for the travel or the money but they want to do things with their dogs.

We have members that are involved with Big Paws helping to train these wonderful companions, members that are very active with the Humane Society, raising money and helping foster animals and finding them

assure you, speaking as one who served a number of years as National Events Coordinator for my breed, the volunteer in charge of poop patrol and clean up at the end of the week (no experience required) was my VERY favorite person on the team.

Learning and growing in a club will inevitably bring you more opportunities, which will continue to progress depending on your skill set, your willingness and your dependability.

So, a few tips about how each and every person reading this can contribute to improving the state of the sport.

1. Join a club. Dues are rarely onerous. Unlike at work, the people you meet already share a passion. Either for the same breed or purebred dogs in general.
2. Volunteer for any one of the highly critical jobs at the show. Clean up. Or catalog sales. Or marking grooming spaces. Or judges transportation. Or hospitality. Or ring steward. Or trophy donations. Or media relations.
3. If you have a great idea for a fundraiser or other labor intensive project, volunteer to organize it. I ts with refreshments for the judges to each ring.
4. If you say you'll do something, for the love of all that's holy, DO it. In as timely and efficient a manner as possible with as little complaining as you can manage.
5. Old-timers, you folks need to be willing to let go of your fiefdoms a little. Training the replacement volunteer for your job is a tremendous gift to the fancy.
6. Club officers, especially for those Breed clubs with restricted membership, consider ways in which to grow your roster. Reaching out to new owners and instilling in them the love and fascination for your breed and ways they can contribute to its future health and well-being is a good thing.
7. Be realistic about your available time and don't bite off more than you can chew. This enables you to not become so stressed that the your volunteer time is taking a toll on your mental health.
8. Personalities, petty jealousies, cliques, ancient histories and axes to grind are all part and parcel of the gig. I have found that a smile and sincere compliment goes a long, long way toward accomplishing a goal. When all else fails, quit banging your head against the brick wall and go around it...
9. Just like we learned in kindergarten... Play nice in the sandbox. Share your toys. Don't bite.

In the Year of Living Well, the purebred dog fancy is stronger when we are inclusive, inviting, encouraging and helpful. Go check it out. Join a dog club and pitch in. You might be surprised by how much more depth it brings to your enjoyment of the sport.

Braggs

CH Vindachs Western Tornado V Teckelwood MS

Owner: Cheri Olson
Cheradachs Kennels
Huron, SD 57350



good homes, Animeals to help keep loved pets in homes where the elderly can no longer do everything that is necessary for their “roommates” and we have members involved with rescue in different breeds.

The club has the Fall Show, Summer Show and now two Agility Trials and we need workers for all of those events and then we also offer classes to the public, both as a way to help people live comfortably with their dog and also to make money for the club and we need volunteers to teach those classes so we are asking a lot of our members in the way of donating time. I recognize how busy everyone is in today’s world and fee time is not something that we can easily give away.

That being said, I am wondering what the club can do for our members? We are asking you to give a lot so what do you want us to do for you? I have received some suggestions from people on how to make the meetings more interesting, and believe me, I know that they are not interesting, and have gotten some good ideas for programs. I need your input and help – how can we move forward this year and offer something to all of our members, not just those that want to do agility, obedience or conformation? What would you like to see? What would you like to take part in? I am open to any and all ideas and suggestions and really want and need them.

Basically I am asking one more thing from you – your ideas on how to make this club more inclusive and fun for the hard working members.

Here’s to a great year,
Paula Spielman

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

