

Shock Collars - An Insider Details The Lies

Matthew Bridges, Barkmate, 2012

1. ... "Will this Shock Collar be effective in stopping my dog barking?" is like asking "Will this prescription migraine medication be effective in stopping my mild headache?"

Just because something is effective doesn't mean it's advisable, or even safe. But when there's money to be made, and the law doesn't require a retailer to elaborate on a deceptively truthful answer, why would they clarify otherwise? It's not their dog they're subjecting to the Shock Collar, so they have no personal investment in the situation aside from selling you a product."

2. ... "In our unbiased experience and estimation, Shock Collars are increasingly being used on an overwhelming majority of dogs that just do not need them.

Part of that blame goes to the customer who is simply seeking the quickest fix, but a large share of the blame must also go to the retailers who lie and mislead about the safety and suitability of Shock Collars."

3. ... "We frequently turned away business that presented situations we were not comfortable in supplying a product for - including for puppies, toy breed dogs, shelter rescue dogs and even more than a few "I just want to shock the little b**** to shut it up" (I wish I was kidding). '

4. ... "As dog lovers above all else, our priority was providing safe and humane products to solve dog problems and selling Shock Collars was the one area where we felt that we could not 100% adhere to this self-imposed code."

5. ... "The pain may only last a second, and your dog may react very quickly to it, but it's still a very unpleasant sensation and make no mistake that the 'training' is simply punishment, and not a valid aversion. An electric shock is an electric shock, regardless of intensity. We don't excuse human abuse because a punch was lighter than it could have been, so why would we accept that reasoning for inflicting pain on our pets?

Personally, I literally cannot count the amount of times I was accidentally zapped by a Shock Collar when assembling, packaging or inspecting the products we had for sale. And let me tell you; it never got tolerable. I jumped and/or dropped the collar every single time it happened. And that was only on the lowest factory settings, whereas some of these collars have a dozen or more higher intensity levels intended for use on dogs. "

6. ... "And worse than that are the stories and concerned phone calls we would get back from purchasers the first time they put the collar on their dog. Stories of

dogs yelping and running around the yard, panicking and getting into a bark-shock correction loop and others cowering in fear every time they received a correction. This is stuff we witnessed in person with our own dogs and when doing call-outs for customer collar fittings."

7..."Friction sores are much more common than retailers will have you believe. They will pass the blame on to the owner and try to reason that the collar was used more than the recommended period of time. That may be true in some cases, but not all.

We had previous customers whose dogs developed really nasty friction sores after only a few days of occasional use. And we've seen these sores in person, and let us assure you that it is much more horrible and distressing when you're looking right at a dog suffering with pain. But throughout this, we gave the same reasoning and excuses that we were TAUGHT by the manufacturers and distributors of Shock Collars — that the dog will get used to it, friction sores are isolated incidents and it will be worth it in the long run."

8. ...Is it true that use of Shock Collars can have a profound negative impact on a dog's personality? "Yes.

We have witnessed both ends of the spectrum, and everything in between. And while it's great and hassle-free if a dog is otherwise unaffected by a Shock Collar, the cases that stick in our minds are the ones at the other end. The cases where a dog has been transformed from a happy family member into a constant bundle of nerves that jumps and cowers at every little sensation. And we've seen and heard that many more times than we wish to count. "

9. ..."Some retailers even tout that Shock Collars have the lowest rate of return. But what does that have to do with you and your dog and, more importantly, your dog's welfare?

A low rate of return is great for a business owner, because it means they retain their profit margin from the initial sale. We could sell 100 Shock Collars to 100 dog owners and only get 1 return, because the products did their job in 99 of the cases. But out of those 99 cases, we can attest that only a tiny handful would absolutely have needed a Shock Collar to treat their problem in the first place."

10. ..."When we stopped selling Shock Collars in 2010, we effectively turned away more than 60-70% of our existing and future business. It was a huge decision, but it was not a hard one. We are dog lovers above all else, and we are not comfortable with the way the products are marketed by retailers and misused by dog owners. This is not a position that will make us popular with suppliers or competitors, but it is an informed and researched decision based on real world practical experience nonetheless."

11. ... "All of the products Barkmate manufacture and sell fall into what would be classed as the Negative Reinforcement category, but they are intended for painless interruption/distraction rather than painful punishment."

12. ... "Anti Bark Shock Collars: Barking is almost never a nuisance problem so dire that it can't be addressed through other means before resorting to Shock Collars. Dogs bark. Dogs should bark to a reasonable extent or volume, because it's part of their personality and socialization. A lot of barking is the equivalent of talking. It's only when that barking gets to the equivalent of running around and screaming that a method of bark control or reduction should be sought. And once on that path, Shock Collars should be the absolute last resort. "

13. ... "The allowance of industry self-regulation up until this point has been treated as an 'everybody lay low for a while' alert between manufacturers, suppliers and retailers. It is only taken seriously to the point that unethical practices are halted or swept under a rug until such time as there is sufficiently low attention to start them again. This is not an industry interested in self-regulation to ensure the best interest of the pet or their owner. It is an industry where loopholes, sales tactics and misinformation is shared openly and freely to maximize sales volume and profit margins."

Mathew Bridges
Sales Manager, Barkmate, 2012

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