

28<sup>th</sup> May 2019

**Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development**

Dog Standards and Guidelines Consultation  
Animal Welfare Regulation

*To whom it may concern,*

*I am writing to you today to oppose some of the new standards proposed in the Draft Standards and Guidelines for the Health and Welfare of Dogs in WA, specifically those outlined below;*

***The flat ban on prong collars***

*S12.2 Prong collars must not be used on a dog.*

***The adjustments to the accepted method of use of Electronic Collars, points (a) & (b)***

*S13.1 An electronic collar must only be used on a dog in accordance with the generally accepted method of use. For the purposes of these Standards, the generally accepted method of use includes:*

*(a) if a reasonable and documented effort has been made to use other training techniques to modify behaviour and these have not been effective;*

*(b) a veterinarian has examined the health and temperament of the dog and reasonably believes that the dog is suitable to wear an electronic collar.*

I think it should also be mentioned, while not a proposed new standard, the guideline regarding a 2-hour maximum on crating as per G4.1 I believe is also unrealistic for many people. Crating a dog for a longer period, as part of a wider program and adequate mental and physical stimulation for the dog, is often a measure to keep a dog safe, and maintain high structure and quality of training, as well as used at many dog clubs and events to ensure safety in an environment with multiple dogs present. We recently travelled with our then 8-month-old dog who both travels and sleeps in his crate. We stayed at a caravan park and used his crate to encourage periods of calm and rest in between outings, walks and periods of other activity and to ensure his safety during set up and when some unrestrained children were running through our campsite. His crate was kept within our view at all times and helped to ensure that, as a young dog, he was not overstimulated or unsafe in a new environment.

Our rescue dog, Kingston, joined our family in December 2018 at about four months old. He had had a tough start to life and had been lovingly restored to health by his foster carers. During this time of extreme pampering, and due to his high drive nature, Kingston had acquired some behaviours that made it difficult for him to fit in successfully with our family. He had no obedience training at all, was highly excitable to a level that was dangerous for his own physical well-being, jumped up repeatedly and was extremely mouthy to the point that my sixteen year old daughter had severe bruising down the back of both legs and I had significant bruising on both arms. He also pulled strongly on lead when using a flat collar, fixated on other dogs and refused to move and lunged dangerously to the end of the lead in excitement to see other dogs and people. At no time was he aggressive, just very excitable with a high drive. Taking him to be treated at the vet was very difficult due to the above behaviours.

I immediately started obedience training at home and from February 2019, Kingston and I spent 9 weeks attending a positive only group training course and trained diligently during the week. This had some positive outcomes as he learnt some obedience skills but all the advice I received to address the jumping, mouthing and lunging did not help with these problems. Kingston was now restricted to small walks up and down our street as I tried to train him to walk with a loose lead using positive only reinforcement methods. I was starting to worry that we might have to rehome Kingston as his current behaviour meant that it would not be safe to have my nieces and nephews visit our house without him being locked away from the family and my daughter could not play with him unsupervised due to the mouthing. I was putting in hours of effort for small results. I was very concerned about his future and what I would do if his behaviour became worse as he grew and matured!

During a vet visit the nurse spoke to me about balanced training methods and suggested I consult Lorri at The Holistic Hound Dog Training. Lorri assessed Kingston carefully at my home and confirmed that he had some significant impulse control issues and some poor learned behaviour in addition to normal puppy exuberance. I immediately signed up for Lorri's Beginners class which was the beginning of a new chapter for Kingston.

Lorri introduced Kingston and I to the use of a prong collar as part of a balanced training program. She carefully and explicitly modelled and then coached me and a small group of owners in the correct use of the collar as part of a structured training program including positive reinforcement, obedience training, situation management to set our dogs up for success and one-on-one individualised support. I have found that, by learning how to use the collar correctly, combined with clear marking of desired and non-desired behaviour, I can support Kingston to make positive choices and help him to stay safe in stimulating situations with significantly less force and strain on the lead than with his previous flat collar. Lorri has repeatedly stressed the correct use of this tool and that it must be used responsibly and appropriately, as demonstrated, as part of a holistic training plan.

While Kingston has more to learn, and is still only a young dog, he is definitely now living his best life! The holistic training plan, including the use of the prong collar, has helped him to develop control of his impulses and respond more appropriately in a wide variety of situations. He now walks with a loose lead most of the time with very little correction and we both enjoy our walks together. It is no longer a chore. He recently went bush walking for the first time and saw a mob of kangaroos which he found very interesting. Previously that would have meant him lunging to the end of the lead and endangering his neck. This time, with a voice correction, he stood and watched. This week he enjoyed a 60-minute ramble in the sunshine taking in the sights along our local river tributary. He can now come with me to greet our neighbours, walks up to them nicely and sits to wait for a pat. If he gets over-excited a vocal correction and a gentle correction with the lead are all that is required to remind him to modify his behaviour. He has learnt not to lunge at other dogs and can walk past with a much lower level of excitement.

I understand that prong collars look intimidating to those who don't understand, but they are a life-changing training tool that responsible dog owners should not, must not, be denied access to. When used as part of a balanced training plan, under the guidance of a qualified trainer they provide owners with an effective, efficient and gentle tool to help their dogs live their best life. Without the use of a prong collar and Lorri's quality assistance, Kingston's life would not be as great as it is now. As a busy, working wife and mother I could not have maintained the high level of time I was

**Carmen Pinker**

expanding on positive only training methods that were not actually helping me with the problem. It is very likely that I would have had to make the heart-breaking decision to either rehome Kingston or he would have been confined to the backyard. His behaviour prior to the introduction of balanced training would have made him difficult to rehome, leaving him at risk of living out his life in a shelter or kennel situation. Now Kingston is living successfully as part of our family. He has regular access inside when we are home and sleeps inside in his crate. He has even made great improvements towards becoming friends with our cat! He gets regular, quality walks that we now both enjoy, and I don't have to be afraid that he is going to yank the lead out of my hand to chase after a person or another dog. I no longer have to worry about him biting my daughter and there is no question that he will need to be restricted to the backyard or rehomed. I now know how to help him become his best self with the assistance of the prong collar. He is a happier dog and I am a much happier owner. Please do not take away this important training tool that has changed Kingston's life. I strongly believe that the Standards you are suggesting as listed above are excessive and will mean other dogs, just like Kingston, being unable to access the type of training they need which will lead to decreased safety and well-being or rehoming/euthanasia. Instead, please require that they are only supplied by and under the direction of a qualified trainer.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission. I would be happy to substantiate the above information by answering any questions or submit further if needed as I feel so strongly about this cause.

Kind Regards,

Carmen Pinker

**Client of**  
**The Holistic Hound Dog Training**

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