

Inquiry into the Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022

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PET PROFESSIONAL GUILD

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PPGA Submission

QLD Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022

– Public Consultation

The Pet Professional Guild Australia (PPGA) is a membership organisation representing pet industry professionals who are committed to science-based, force-free training and pet care. We are an official branch of the Pet Professional Guild, a worldwide organisation committed to advocating, educating and encouraging improvements in companion animal welfare through the use of fear free techniques. Currently we have over 350 professional members and around 700 other pet owners around Australia, many of these professional trainers in the animal industry, mostly with companion animals such as dogs, cats, horses, birds and pocket pets. The Pet Professional Guild Australia members and affiliates focus on a pet's physical, mental, environmental and nutritional well-being, a holistic approach to the care and training of family pets. It is heartening to see in the bill that animal's behavioural needs will be considered as part of minimum care requirements.

Our PPGA members include some of most well renowned veterinary behaviourists and trainers, many of which have worked with rescues and councils in the past and have a wealth of knowledge in behavioural modification.

Here is our input related to the following Amendment Bill sections:

DIVISION 5 Possession or use of prohibited devices

Sections 37A) Possession or use of prohibited devices

(1) A person must not possess any of the following devices (each a *prohibited device*) unless the person has a reasonable excuse

a) Prong collar: 'there's *no reasonable excuse* for a prong collar to be considered an acceptable piece of equipment to be used by people on a dog or a cat.'

We have moved on from those times when tools like these were acceptable. Science tells us that positive reinforcement is the most ethical and efficient way of training dogs.

Prong collars cause animals to become distressed, anxious, fearful and sometimes aggressive. Injuries from collars range from skin irritation, neck punctures to crushed and collapsed tracheas, spinal cord and back problems.

Prong collars inflict pain to the animal and the use of punishment with our pets can damage relationships permanently.

Prong collars should be prohibited under all circumstances.

Prong collar advocates may argue a number of incorrect statements. One in particular is that some dogs (especially some breeds) can only be controlled with a prong collar. The fact is that if you're working with a skilled and qualified trainer who's using positive reinforcement based on up to date scientific evidence, you can teach your dog to perform any behavior without the use of pain or fear. Many of our PPGA members work with reactive and aggressive dogs, assistance dogs as well as dogs required for protection and have successfully helped these dogs either learn the required behaviours or change their behaviour without the need for aversive training techniques. It may also be argued that there will be working dogs such as police, detector, search and rescue or army dogs that require these to get a certain behaviour. Again, there are plenty of organisations across the world that have successfully switched to more human, positive reinforcement based methods.

There is no situation whereby this tool should be utilised, so we as an organisation feel there is no 'reasonable excuse' under which these tools should be used. This should be all across the board: including for police dogs, customs' dogs, army and squads, pet dog training, guide dogs, animal Control officers etc

b) another restraint device prescribed by regulation – 'restraints' meaning: collars, leads, harnesses, muzzles, halters

Items that should have 'prohibited use status – under all circumstances' and that should be included in your list of 'prohibited devices' are:

- E-collars or electric shock collars
- Choker/check chains

Attached to this submission are the following documents:

- PPGA Media Release - Prong Collars and the proposed banning of their use in QLD
- Position Statement on The Use of Shock in Animal Training
- Position Statement on the Use of Pet Correction Devices
- Position Statement on the Use of Dominance Theory in Animal Training
- Position Statement on The Use of Chock and Prong Collars

These position documents contain further advice and more specifically references to numerous scientific studies that have been conducted that provide evidence to the fact that the use of this cruel tool has long term negative effects on the training process, increases stress and anxiety in dogs and can result in both short-term and long-term psychological damage to animals.

The Pet Professional Guild Australia thanks for the opportunity to provide some feedback on the Qld Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022 and would like to be considered in the near future as one of the QLD Government key stakeholders for consultation for any future amendments or development of Animal Welfare legislation, particularly in regards to companion animal welfare.

Our companion animals deserve a much better future - free of pain, fear and intimidation where they can have a lasting and loving relationships with their people.

If you would like to contact us further to discuss, please email us at president@ppgaustralia.net.au

Yours Sincerely

Barbara Hodel
President
Pet Professional Guild Australia

Position Statements

<https://www.ppgaaustralia.net.au/shockcollars>

<https://www.ppgaaustralia.net.au/chokeandprongcollarpositionstatement>

<https://www.ppgaaustralia.net.au/Statement-on-the-Use-of-Pet-Correction-Devices>

<https://www.ppgaaustralia.net.au/Statement-on-the-Use-of-Pet-Correction-Devices>

<https://www.ppgaaustralia.net.au/DominanceTheoryPositionStatement>

PPGA MEDIA RELEASE

Prong Collars and the proposed banning of their use in QLD

The Pet Professional Guild Australia welcomes the move by the Queensland Government to review their animal welfare legislation, particularly in regards to the proposed new amendments in regards to the banning of the use of prong collars.

PPG Australia is a membership organisation representing pet industry professionals who are committed to science-based, force-free training and pet care.

We are an official branch of the Pet Professional Guild, a worldwide organisation committed to advocating, educating and encouraging improvements in companion animal welfare through the use of fear free techniques. Our member's skills and knowledge are maintained to the highest standard through continued education from trainers and researchers across the world.

It is the position of the Pet Professional Guild Australia that effective animal training procedures lay the foundation for an animal's healthy socialisation and training and helps prevent behavior problems. The general pet-owning public should be educated by organisations and associations to ensure pet animals live in nurturing and stable environments to better prevent behavior problems and help ensure the overall well-being of the animal. Consistent with this effort, it is the position of the Pet Professional Guild Australia (PPGA) 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 PPGA's membership finds that training and behavior problems are consistently and effectively solved without the use of choke or prong collars but with the alternative and positive methods of reinforcing the animal-human bond. Evidence indicates that rather than speeding the learning process, harsh training methods actually slow the training process, add to the animal's stress and can result in both short-term and long-term psychological damage to animals. Common problems which can result from the use of choke and prong collars:

Physical problems

While precise information on the potential damage caused by the use of choke and prong collars is still being collected, there are many cases of dogs suffering soft tissue damage, eye problems, strangulation (leading to death), tracheal/esophageal damage and neurological problems resulting from the use of choke/prong collars.

Training Fallout

Choke chains and prong collars are designed to administer negative reinforcement and positive punishment. Training techniques based in these two learning theory quadrants are prone to side effects. As an example, a dog wearing a choke or prong collar that fearfully barks and lunges at another dog would then be choked or pain inflicted by the prong collar. The pain and choking then adds to the negative association the dog wearing the collar has with other dogs. This is the polar opposite of what an ideal training protocol is designed to accomplish.

Even if a dog is free of reactivity issues, using a choke or prong is less than ideal. Today there are many effective alternatives available for training and management of skills where choke and prong collars have been traditionally used for teaching loose-leash-walking and formal/precision heel training

Conclusion

It is the position of the PPGA 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, PPGA members optimize the use of functional analysis to identify and resolve problem behaviors such as leash-pulling and lunging, where choke and prong collars are typically used. Further, the PPGA and its members actively recommend against the use of choke and prong collars while actively promoting the use of flat buckle collars, harnesses and other types of control equipment that are safer for the animal.

Kind Regards

Barbara Hodel

President

Pet Professional Guild Australia

