Electronic Training: Indications and How-to
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The use of an electronic training product can make training more complicated for the dog trainer, the owner, and the dog. However, like any of the other training methodologies, electronic training can be successful, if it is approached properly. Situations in which electronic training equipment can be helpful

There are a number of situations in which electronic training equipment can augment the training process, including:

- A partial level of success has been achieved with another training product or technique.
- The difficulty of consistent correction is understood, and the effectiveness of these devices in a variety of situations is recognized.
- A dog trainer recommends electronic training and can effectively teach the methodology.

Once people become familiar with electronic training products and use them properly, they find the methodology is proven, efficient, economical, and ethical.

The type of training in which an electronic aid is used is critically important, for it will influence the type of product and methods used. Is the equipment being used to teach a new obedience command, correct some common misbehavior, or is it being used to reinforce another electronic training methodology?

Factors affecting success

Before an electronic training tool is used, it is strongly suggested that the entire training situation be re-examined. There are three major considerations in this re-evaluation:

1. Does the owner know what he is doing, does he understand the training process, and can he apply proper methodology to a specific situation?
2. Is the owner training the dog properly, does he have a plan for this specific misbehavior, and is he executing that plan appropriately and correctly?
3. Is the dog trainable? Is the dog in question stubborn, set in his ways, or unintelligent?

(I believe that all dogs are trainable. Dogs that seem stubborn, or unintelligent, have simply not been trained properly, consistently, or effectively.)

Of these factors, the first two are most important. If training is not successful, in most cases it is because owner education, preparedness, consistency or commitment is lacking. This may be difficult for some owners to accept, but remember that we have invited dogs into our environment. It is our responsibility to teach them in ways they can understand. This is incredibly important, because if an owner has not taken the time, or applied the appropriate techniques properly and consistently, training with an electronic product will not make a difference. It will only confuse even the smartest dog.

There are certain signals that suggest a dog has not been properly trained. In these instances a dog may:

- Resist when his owner attempts to place a collar around his neck.
- Withstand correction, of any type, in the presence of certain distractions.
- Control his owner by acting timid or by ignoring his owner.
- Panic when he senses a warning.
- Attempt to escape when receiving a correction.
- Do anything except the behavior necessary to avoid the correction.

Education is the key. If an owner takes the time to understand electronic training - why it works, how it works, how to apply the appropriate techniques - it can be a beneficial tool.

Electronic training requires knowledge and skill

Electronic training is not for everyone. From a training standpoint, it is definitely more sophisticated, with many more variables. The first of these variables is the dog himself. The need for electronic training usually indicates that a dog has multiple behavioral or training problems. Further, it usually denotes some difficulty correcting those behaviors.

In these cases, it is recommended that an owner approach electronic training only after first consulting, or retaining, a dog trainer who has practical experience with such tools. For those owners who attempt to use electronic training equipment on their own, buy a product which...
Redirection and praise are far more important.

Electronic training combines several different techniques. Applying a correction is only a small part of a training program. The importance of redirection and reward of frustration. As a dog trainer or owner, it is necessary to be as disciplined as you want the dog to be.

From escape and other inappropriate responses. This, in turn, makes it increasingly important not to correct arbitrarily or out of frustration.

Finally, the beginning point of most electronic training includes the use of a leash, which serves to help redirect the dog away from escape and other inappropriate responses. By spending just a few days introducing the dog to the collar, other problems can be prevented.

General Rules: All of the general rules of obedience training apply to electronic training as well. In fact, they are probably even more important in electronic training. These guidelines include:

- Do not train the dog for extended periods of time.
- Limit the number of corrections the dog receives in one training session and in one training day.
- Be sure that corrections are properly balanced with reward.
- Always give the correction at the same time. That is, do so only when the dog is actually misbehaving, not before the misbehavior occurs or after the misbehavior has stopped. This is important because it gives the dog a chance to learn, (i.e., to understand what causes the correction in the first place).

Perhaps the one most essential general rule is to work on only one behavior at a time.

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At the same time, the use of these devices may represent the future of dog training. The staggering growth of electronic alternatives are bleak for dogs that do not meet the human standards set for their behavior. If these devices are used properly, and in the right situation, they can save the lives of some dogs. In many cases, the ground rules that have some foundation in training philosophy.

During training, the dog should constantly and consistently be given a deserved reward - preferably praise and petting - for behavior that meets his training objectives. Again, timing is critical. The dog must be able to make the connection between the reward and the appropriate behavior.

Redirection is equally important, if not more so. In many electronic training situations, the dog trainer/owner needs to provide an alternate behavior for the dog. This redirection provides a known behavior pattern that the dog can fall back on, enabling the dog trainer/owner to reward him. A good example of such a behavior pattern is the 'Sit,' 'Get your ball,' or other command the dog already understands.

Have a plan: Overall, what one tries to do with redirection and reward is build better behavior in the dog. But when building anything, it is useful to have a blueprint - a plan that outlines specifically what to do under an array of circumstances. Because of all the variables involved with electronic training, the dog trainer/owner needs to have such a plan. He needs to know exactly what he is going to do before a situation arises. Because, when it comes to training dogs, he needs to expect the unexpected. But if there is a plan in place, he will know exactly what to do.

The best plans are the simplest - the ones that ask the dog to do something basic. Pick something the dog has done many times before; perhaps a 'Sit' and 'Stay' command. Reliance on an old habit can bring a misbehaving dog - even a frightened or frazzled dog - back into the comfort zone. This will enable the dog trainer/owner to reward the dog, or regroup, should this become necessary.

Conclusion

Electronic training applications should rarely be the very first choice for canine training. But it is an effective alternative when other techniques have failed. The dog trainer/owner has to be very careful to use its techniques properly.

It is best to understand the ground rules that have some foundation in training philosophy.

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At the same time, the use of these devices may represent the future of dog training. The staggering growth of electronic training products certainly suggests that this may be so.

As the electronic training technology grows less expensive, it becomes increasingly popular. Savvy manufacturers and
marketers will continue to develop products that offer pets more comfort and their owners a wide variety of tools. Dog trainers and dog owners need to be prepared to offer the same.