



August 2023

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about electronic collars (e-collars). The UK has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and my ministerial colleagues and I are committed to raising these standards even higher.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has considered the evidence regarding the use of electronic aids to control dogs. While I note your concerns about the ban, I am aware that research commissioned by Defra showed that many e-collar users were not using them properly or in compliance with the manufacturers' instructions. As well as being misused to inflict unnecessary harm, there is also concern that e-collars can redirect aggression or generate anxiety-based behaviour in pets, making underlying behavioural and health problems worse. In addition, the Government's consultation on this received more than 7,000 responses.

Following this research, as well as engagement with trainers, behaviourists, e-collar manufacturers, the animal welfare sector, veterinary and dog keeping organisations, the Government will ban training collars in England that can deliver an electric shock to a cat or dog by a hand-held remote-controlled device.

I understand that this ban will not extend to collars which use alternative stimuli, such as noise, spray or vibration. Invisible fencing systems which help animals quickly learn to stay within a boundary and have welfare benefits, such as keeping pets away from roads, will also still be permitted. These new regulations will come into force on the 1st February 2024.

While I appreciate that you may be disappointed by this response, I am assured from my ministerial colleagues that the draft Animal Welfare (Electronic Collars) Regulations 2023, relating to the use of e-collars, were developed after considering a broad range of factors. This includes academic research, including Defra-commissioned research, as well as responses to the public consultation and direct engagement with trainers, behaviourists, e-collar manufacturers, the animal welfare sector, veterinary and dog keeping organisations.

In April 2023, the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission also published a report giving its assessment of the available evidence and research, which concluded that use of e-collars should be banned.



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I am aware that the statutory instrument includes an exemption for His Majesty's Armed Forces where required for defence purposes. I understand that this is a specific and limited exemption to ensure that important national security and public safety capabilities are retained. The use of an e-collar in such circumstances would be subject to the internal Ministry of Defence animal welfare standards and permissions.

Regarding livestock, I am aware that the vast majority of livestock worrying cases relate to unaccompanied dogs which have escaped their owners' property without their owners' knowledge. The ban on electronic collars does not extend to containment systems, or invisible fencing, as these are not associated with the same degree of harm as electric shock collars.

Further, I know that it is always best practice to keep your dog on a lead around livestock. The Countryside Code also makes specific reference to keeping dogs in sight and under control around livestock. The Countryside Code also advises dog walkers to always check local signs as there are situations where this is a legal requirement for all or part of the year, for example when on Open Access Land between 1 March and 31 July. If anyone has concerns about their dog's behaviour when outside, they should keep their dog on a lead.

I am aware that reward-based training is widely regarded as the preferred form of training dogs, as recommended by animal welfare and veterinary organisations such as the RSPCA and British Veterinary Association. The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission (SAWC) recently published a report on the use of handheld remote controlled training devices.

SAWC's inquiry into electric shock collars considered all available academic literature and involved collecting additional evidence from stakeholders, both for and against a ban. They considered a range of policy options and concluded that the use of electric shock collars should be banned for all training purposes and that reward-based training methods are at least as effective.

Yours faithfully,



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