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Mr Thomas Slater

Our ref: TO2018/02940/MO

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Dear Mr Slater,

Thank you for your email of 1 February about electric shock collars. I have been asked to reply.

I understand the strong feelings that some people have about the use of these training devices and we are aware of the Scottish Government's recent announcement, intending to ban their use. Before introducing a blanket ban on their use however, the Government would need to be satisfied that such a ban was in the public interest and could be supported from an animal welfare point of view.

In 2013, Defra published research it had commissioned on the use of electronic training aids for dogs. The findings provide evidence that electronic aids can have a negative impact on the welfare of some dogs, but not all. The evidence from the studies was not strong enough to support a ban on the devices under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The claim that electronic training aids may be no more effective than other training methods is not in itself a reason to introduce a ban or to impose restrictions on their use. Having said that, our advice is that electronic training aids should only be used as a last resort and on the recommendation of a professional such as a vet, a suitably qualified dog behaviourist, or a dog trainer, and should only be used by competent operators.

We have updated the statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs (made under the Animal Welfare Act 2006), and strengthened the form of wording on the use of negative training methods. The draft code, which is currently before Parliament, makes it clear that any training method which includes physical punishment may cause pain, suffering and distress and could lead to aggressive responses and worsen the problems they aim to address.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Oroma
Ministerial Contact Unit

