

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **New advisory discourages dog owners from using shock and prong collars**

- *Advisory developed by the Dog Training Standards Workgroup emphasises the risks posed by the use of shock and prong collars*
- *Rewards-based training methods can be just as effective or more effective than aversive ones, with fewer welfare risks*
- *The workgroup will continue to review the regulatory approaches for such training devices, and carry out public education and engagement on dog training*

*Singapore, 26 July 2025* – To support humane and effective dog training, an advisory on the use of dog training devices is now available for pet owners, dog trainers, veterinarians, animal welfare groups, and the public. Developed by the Dog Training Standards Workgroup, co-chaired by the Animal & Veterinary Service (AVS), a cluster of the National Parks Board (NParks) and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), this advisory provides science-based guidance to help dog trainers and pet owners in making informed decisions about training methods, particularly the use of aversive tools such as electronic shock collars and prong collars, which pose higher welfare risks when misused. Dog owners are discouraged from using shock and prong collars. Rewards-based training methods may be just as effective or more effective in training the same behaviours without the associated risks and should always be considered first before exploring more aversive training methods. The advisory is part of broader efforts to safeguard animal health and welfare and raise standards in the dog training industry.

### **Raising standards in dog training**

Since 2020, AVS has worked with stakeholders through the Rehoming and Adoption Workgroup (RAWG) to raise standards in dog training. RAWG identified gaps in trainer standards and accreditation and published guidelines on dog training and rehabilitation. This was followed by the AVS-Accredited Certified Dog Trainer (ACDT) scheme launched in 2022, which recognises science-based certifications from international organisations and sets a clear benchmark for safe and effective dog training.

Through RAWG's discussions, the use of aversive dog training devices—particularly electronic shock and prong collars—was identified as an area requiring closer assessment. To better understand public views on these devices, AVS conducted focus

group discussions in April 2023 with a wide range of stakeholders, including dog trainers, veterinarians, animal welfare groups, working dog units, and pet owners.

The discussions revealed a strong consensus on the need to raise awareness about the risks associated with aversive training devices and to promote safer, more humane alternatives. At the same time, some participants acknowledged that there may be specific circumstances where such devices could be used—provided they are applied appropriately and by trained professionals.

In August 2024, the Dog Training Standards Workgroup was formed, co-chaired by AVS and the SPCA. It brought together dog trainers, veterinarians, animal welfare groups, and representatives from working dog units. The workgroup was tasked with developing proposals to promote rewards-based training methods through the Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA) approach, reviewing the use of aversive training devices such as shock and prong collars, and exploring regulatory frameworks for their use to safeguard animal welfare.

### **Advisory on the use of aversive training devices**

The *Advisory on the Use of Aversive Dog Training Devices (Electronic Shock and Prong Collars)* is the workgroup's first deliverable and focuses on electronic shock collars and prong collars, which pose higher welfare risks when misused. It provides clear, science-based guidance to help dog trainers and pet owners in making informed and responsible decisions about their training methods, addresses misconceptions, and promotes rewards-based training methods through the LIMA approach. The advisory also includes position statements from other international organisations regarding the use of such devices. It complements a previous set of published *Guidelines for Dog Training and Behaviour Rehabilitation* launched in January 2022, which educates dog trainers and pet dog owners on safe, science-based, and effective means of dog training to ensure good animal welfare and behavioural outcomes throughout training and rehabilitation. The advisory is available on AVS' website at the following link <https://go.gov.sg/dogtrainingdevices>.

In addition, the Singapore Veterinary Association (SVA), which is represented in the workgroup, has issued a separate position statement discouraging the routine use of

aversive dog training devices, endorsing the LIMA approach, and providing recommendations on managing animal behavioural issues, to safeguard animal welfare.

The workgroup will continue studying different approaches to raise training standards, including developing a section in the Codes of Animal Welfare for dog trainers. It will also explore regulatory options for training devices, taking into consideration the diverse views of the public and within the dog training sector. This is part of AVS' broader efforts to review the Animals and Birds Act in close consultation with stakeholders.

AVS is also benchmarking against international practices and reviewing scientific research to learn from the experiences of overseas counterparts. Through this, the workgroup aims to shape a regulatory approach that is not only science-based and effective, but also practical and well-suited to Singapore's context and needs.

### **Public education and outreach on animal behaviour and responsible pet ownership**

Pet owners and the community have a role to play in safeguarding animal health and welfare. AVS will continue to build relationships with like-minded individuals and communities to spread awareness on the science behind animal care and promote responsible pet ownership in Singapore. To raise awareness on the science behind animal welfare and behaviour, AVS has also been organising seminars, workshops and webinars that feature international experts in the fields of ethology, animal behaviour and welfare. These are part of AVS' efforts to develop the competencies of the industry and the public through a science-based approach. Under AVS' Responsible Pet Ownership programme, which covers dog welfare, basic training, responsible pet ownership, and animal behaviour, AVS reaches out to students across various educational levels, from preschools to tertiary institutions.

To complement existing school outreach efforts, a dedicated school outreach programme focused on understanding canine behaviour will also be rolled out this month for secondary school students. Under this programme, secondary school students will get the opportunity to learn about canine behaviour, the various dog training techniques, and take part in a hands-on session at the Centre for Animal Rehabilitation.

AVS will continue to engage with the public and stakeholders to raise standards within the pet sector. This is in line with the vision to transform Singapore into a City in Nature, for which community stewardship is a key thrust.

The advisory was officially launched by Minister of State for National Development and Trade and Industry, Mr Alvin Tan, during the Pets' Day Out event held at Tampines Boulevard Park on 26 July 2025. A signature event of AVS, Pets' Day Out serves as a regular platform for animal welfare groups, pet businesses, veterinarians, and pet lovers to come together.

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