

Scotland to ban electric shock dog collars

- 24 January 2018

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The use of electric shock collars on dogs is to be effectively banned in Scotland, the Scottish government has confirmed.

Ministers said in November that they would continue to allow the use of the training devices.

That was despite animal welfare charities warning that the collars can cause unnecessary suffering.

Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham has now announced that the government will go further.

The move follows a campaign by MSPs including Scottish Conservative Maurice Golden and the SNP's Ben Macpherson, as well as animal charities including the Kennel Club, the Scottish SPCA and the Dogs Trust.

Electric collars are used to train animals with behavioural problems - but campaigners argue that they are cruel, and have questioned their effectiveness as training aids.

'Completely unacceptable'

Ms Cunningham said she had made the decision after listening to the concerns that had been raised - particularly over the ready availability on the internet of cheap devices which can be bought by anyone and used to deliver painful electric shocks.

She added: "I have decided to take steps to effectively and promptly ban their use in Scotland.

"Causing pain to dogs by inappropriate training methods is clearly completely unacceptable and I want there to be no doubt that painful or unpleasant training for dogs will not be tolerated".



Image copyright [Getty Images](#) Image caption The collars allow dog owners to deliver an electric shock to

Ms Cunningham said she would work with the authorities to ensure that "anyone found causing pain to dogs through the use of collars or other devices can be prosecuted as they deserve".

She confirmed: "I will therefore be issuing strong ministerial guidance on the use of all painful training devices for courts to take into consideration in any cases brought before them regarding unnecessary suffering through the use of these devices."

Initial draft guidance **has already been published**, with the ban to be introduced through guidance issued under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 in the coming months.

Draft guidance states that: "Causing unnecessary suffering is an offence under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. This includes suffering caused by inappropriate training methods."

Once the guidance has been finalised, the courts will be able to take it into account when establishing liability in a prosecution.

Holyrood debate

The government said in November that it would tighten the restrictions around the use of electronic dog training collars, but their use would still have been possible under supervision.

It also said it was working with trainers to develop a recognised qualification for those who wished to continue using the collars in a "controlled, responsible way" to help train dogs.

But Ms Cunningham said that the proposed qualification would not now be created.

The collars are already banned in Wales, but remain in use in England.

The Scottish Parliament had been due to debate the use of electric shock collars on Thursday afternoon, with opposition parties expected to unite in calling for a ban to be introduced.

The debate was to have been led by Mr Golden, with a petition backing the call attracting about 20,000 signatures by Wednesday afternoon.

Ms Cunningham's announcement on Wednesday was welcomed by campaigners and politicians from all parties.

Mr Golden said he was "very pleased the Scottish government is finally announcing a ban on the use of electric shock collars for dogs, that they have listened to our campaign, and to the 20,000 people who signed my petition."

And Harry Huyton, director of animal charity OneKind, said electric shock collars were "cruel, unnecessary and ineffective".