# Victoria Government Gazette

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**Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986**

REVISION OF ANIMAL WELFARE CODES OF PRACTICE

Order in Council

The Governor in Council under section 7(1) of the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986** (POCTA Act):

(1) revokes the Code of Practice for the Tethering of Animals (Revision No. 1), as published in the Government Gazette G28 on 8 July 2004, and makes the Code of Practice for the Tethering of Animals (Revision No. 2) in Schedule 1;

(2) revokes the Code of Accepted Farming Practice for the Welfare of Sheep (Revision No. 2), as published in the Government Gazette S135 on 21 June 2007, and makes the Code of Accepted Farming Practice for the Welfare of Sheep (Revision No. 3) in Schedule 2;

(3) revokes the Code of Practice for Training Dogs and Cats to Wear Electronic Collars as published in the Government Gazette G48 on 1 December 2011 and makes the Code of Practice for Training Dogs and Cats to Wear Electronic Collars (Revision No. 1) in Schedule 3 and;

(4) revokes the Code of Practice for the Use of Animals from Municipal Pounds approved by Governor in Council on 19 April 1988 and published in the Government Gazette G47 on 7 December 1988.

Pursuant to section 7(5) of the POCTA Act, this Order, including the Codes of Practice in Schedules 1, 2 and 3, will take effect on the date of their publication in the Government Gazette.

Dated 10 November 2020

Responsible Minister:

THE HON JACLYN SYMES MP
Minister for Agriculture

CLAIRE CHISHOLM
Clerk of the Executive Council

## SCHEDULE 1 – ORDER IN COUNCIL – REVISION OF ANIMAL WELFARE CODES OF PRACTICE

## CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE TETHERING OF ANIMALS (REVISION NO. 2)

**Contents**



### 1 INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this Code, tethering is defined as the securing of an animal to an anchor point to confine it to a desired area. It is used to prevent animals straying in the owner's absence (e.g. dogs) or to allow animals to graze unfenced pasture (e.g. sheep and goats), or to display animals (e.g. agricultural shows). Tethering should not be confused with short-term tying up or with hobbling. *Tethering is regarded as a temporary method of restraint that is not suitable for long-term confinement.*

Tethering of animals exposes them to increased risk of stress, injury or death. In particular, tethered animals may be:

- unable to evade predators
- unable to obtain shelter from climatic extremes
- unable to obtain sufficient exercise
- isolated from their companions
- exposed to environmental hazards, such as road traffic

For these reasons, other confinement methods appropriate for the species should be sought. Tethering of animals requires a high standard of animal husbandry and exceptional care, including regular inspections.

This Code has been developed to assist people to tether animals correctly when circumstances make it a necessary method of confining and protecting animals. Persons tethering animals should also refer to relevant legislation including the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019.

The Code specifies the requirements for tethering dogs, sheep, goats, cattle, donkeys and horses. Birds and cats must not be tethered under any circumstances. The restraint of sows by neck tethers is considered an unacceptable practice. This Code does not refer to exotic wildlife and other animals on exhibition, for example circus animals.

Animals should never be tethered in conditions where they are vulnerable to heatwaves, severe cold or driving rain.

## 2 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

### 2.1 Site selection

A suitable tethering site should:

- be reasonably flat (steep sites are unsuitable)
- be clear of obstructions that may cause the tether to become entangled or cause injury to the animal. An animal can be choked when the tether becomes entangled or can be hung when the animal jumps over a fence or other obstacles.

A suitable tethering site should not be:

- rocky
- prone to flooding
- waterlogged
- across a footpath or be close to any road where there is fast moving traffic. The proximity of people or vehicles should not cause animals to take fright. Tethers should not allow the animal to stand within two body lengths of a road.

### 2.2 Type of tether

There are two basic types of tether:

1. Fixed tether – the anchor point is fixed
2. Running tether – the anchor point can move freely along a wire.

For both types of tether an appropriate neck band or halter should be fitted to the animal. Tethering by the leg or foot is unacceptable. The collar or halter must be fitted with a swivel to which the tether is attached.

The other end of the tether should be firmly attached via a swivel to:

**For a centre fixed anchor point**

- an appropriate fixed anchor point, such as a steel spike or stake driven to ground level, which allows 360 degrees of movement at ground level. The anchor point must allow the animal to cover the area without tangling. An additional swivel halfway along the length of the tether may help to keep it tangle-free.

**For a running tether**

- a strong wire which should be firmly secured at either end to trees, fences or posts but must have stops at either end to ensure that the running tether cannot become entangled or injure the animal.

Metal chain is an acceptable material for a tether. Chain provides greater security than other materials. The chain should be of an appropriate weight and strength for the animal to be tethered. Chains for dogs would obviously be lighter than those used for cattle and should not be so heavy as to cause an animal a problem in moving. Rope, cord, baling twine and other similar materials are not considered to be suitable for tethering because they are likely to become twisted and cause entanglement, or fray and break.

Tethered animals must be able to lie down and stand up without restriction.

**Animals tied together rather than tethered to a fixed point**

Because of the risk of entanglement and consequent strangulation or death from hanging, animals must not be tied together unless under very close supervision in safe surroundings. Animals tied together must be of similar weight.

### 2.3 Training

Animals should not be tethered unless they are of placid temperament. All animals must be closely monitored when left alone on the tether for the first time. Some animals may adapt quickly and others may require a period of training. Training requires a gradual increase in the amount of time left alone on the tether.

**2.4 Frequency of inspection**

Tethered animals require greater supervision and owner vigilance than other animals. They must be inspected at least twice during daylight hours in each 24 hour period. This should be increased to three times, or preferably more, in very hot weather.

Collars and head collars should be regularly inspected to ensure they are properly fitted – they must never interfere with or constrict throat passages. They should be well maintained and regularly checked to ensure they are not causing injury or discomfort.

Collars and head collars should be removed if wounds are apparent.

Tether chains, wires and anchor points should be inspected regularly for signs of wear.

**2.5 Food and water**

All animals must receive sufficient food containing adequate nutrients to meet their requirements for good health and vitality. Herbivorous animals must be able to graze or browse freely. Tethered grazing animals should receive supplementary feeding where pasture is not adequate.

Sufficient clean, potable fresh water to meet the animal's physiological needs must be available at all times, for example in troughs or heavy containers, which are firmly fixed on the perimeter of the tether.

Animals that are tethered for the purposes of exhibition as part of an event, such as an agricultural show, are not required to have continuous access to feed and water provided they are given access to feed and water at least twice daily.

**2.6 Shelter**

Tethered animals must have access to physical shelter at all times. For animals classified as equids and bovids, this shelter may be provided by a tree.

**2.7 Duration of tethering**

All animals must be taken off fixed tethers and exercised at least daily. The amount of exercise should be appropriate to the species and to the age, health, working status and breed of the individual animal.

**3 SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS**

**3.1 Dogs**

- The site must provide a minimum tether radius of 3 metres allowing 6 metres of run.
- Dogs less than 4 months old should not be tethered.
- Bitches in season must not be tethered where entire males may have access.
- Bitches about to give birth must not be tethered.
- Tethered dogs must have ready access to a kennel, shed or other protection from the elements and for sleeping. The kennel should be of an appropriate size for the particular animal and must not cause a threat of entanglement.
- As a guide, working farm dogs should be let off tethers at least 2 hours per day during daylight hours. It is recommended that wherever possible all other dogs that are tethered should be released under supervision for 2 hours in every 12 hours.
- Dogs must not be tethered adjacent to a fence in a manner that places them at danger of death by hanging.

**3.2 Sheep, goats, cattle, donkeys and horses**

- The site must permit a minimum tether radius of at least 6 metres for sheep, goats, cattle and donkeys and 9 metres for horses.
- The site should be well grassed and provide adequate grazing at all times, especially if grass is to be the sole source of food. Periodic inspection of the site should be made to ensure feed availability and suitability of site. It should be free from poisonous plants, shrubs and trees.

- Horses or donkeys less than 2 years old should not be tethered.
- Mares in season must not be tethered near stallions.
- Mares about to foal or with a foal must not be tethered.
- Stallions must not be tethered near any other horses.
- The temperament and exercise needs of cattle, goats and sheep are such that they should not be tethered if under 6 months of age. Young animals need more exercise than a tether would permit and they are likely to resist the tether and sustain injuries.
- Because of the risk of entanglement, animals must not be tied together unless under very close supervision in safe surroundings. For example, calves tied together for foster feeding. Animals tied together must be of similar weight.

## SCHEDULE 2 – ORDER IN COUNCIL – REVISION OF ANIMAL WELFARE CODES OF PRACTICE

## CODE OF ACCEPTED FARMING PRACTICE FOR THE WELFARE OF SHEEP (VICTORIA) (REVISION NO. 3)

**Contents**

**INTRODUCTION**

This code is intended as a guide for all people who handle and manage sheep. The aim of establishing this code is to achieve humane husbandry in all types of sheep enterprises. Assistance and specific advice on management and disease control in sheep should be obtained from qualified advisers, whose services are available through government and private agencies.

Sheep are kept in situations which vary from extensive grazing to close confinement and housing. Whatever the form of husbandry, owners, agents, managers and stockpersons have a moral responsibility and a clearly defined legal responsibility to care for the welfare of animals under their control.

The crucial importance of sound animal husbandry principles cannot be over-emphasised in the course of meeting the welfare requirements of animals. This code outlines sound sheep husbandry practices but is not prescriptive because good stock-handlers need to be flexible in their approach to caring for their animals.

Among the most important factors affecting welfare in a flock are the behaviour and attitude of the manager. Important skills of the competent manager and stockpersons include the ability to anticipate situations in which the welfare of the animals may be at risk and to recognise early signs of distress or ill-health in animals, so that appropriate preventive or early remedial action may be taken.

The basic requirements for the welfare of sheep are:

(a) a level of nutrition adequate to sustain good health and vigour;

(b) access to sufficient water of suitable quality to meet physiological needs;

(c) social contact with other sheep; but with sufficient space to stand, to lie down and stretch their limbs;

(d) protection from predation;

(e) protection from pain, injury and disease;

(f) protection from extremes of weather, which may be life threatening;

(g) provision of reasonable precautions against the effects of natural disasters, e.g. firebreaks and fodder storage;

(h) handling facilities which under normal usage do not cause injury and which minimise stress to the sheep.

## 1 FOOD AND WATER

**Minimum standard**

Sheep must be provided with access to a diet which is nutritionally adequate to maintain health and meet the appropriate physiological requirements for growth, pregnancy, lactation and to withstand cold exposure.

Sheep must have access to water.

Where provisions for health and vitality cannot be met sheep must be moved, agisted, sold or slaughtered on site.

**Recommended practice**

### 1.1 Food

In all systems of management, continual assessment should be made of the needs of the sheep in relation to the amount, quality and continuity of feed supply.

Sheep should be excluded, as far as possible, from toxic plants and other substances suspected of being deleterious to their health.

### 1.2 Water

Watering points should be of sufficient capacity and allow safe access. Regular assessment should be made of the quality and quantity of water supply.

Mechanical equipment controlling the delivery of water (including windmills and bores) should be inspected regularly and kept in good working order. Inspection should be more frequent in hot weather. Sheep should not be deprived of water for more than 36 hours. This period should be reduced in the event of hot weather.

The quality of water provided should be adequate to maintain sheep health. Drinking water which contains potentially toxic levels of salts, or other deleterious substances, should be monitored and managed to minimise deleterious effects.

Where sufficient good quality water to maintain health cannot be provided, the sheep should be moved to other areas where an adequate supply is available. Alternatively, they should be sold or humanely slaughtered on site.

## 2 DROUGHT

Drought is defined as severe food and/or water shortage following prolonged periods of abnormally low rainfall. It is not a normal seasonal decline in the quantity and quality of food available.

**Recommended practice**

Owners and their advisers should consider animal welfare as a major issue in their development of drought relief strategies.

Property strategies for drought management should be prepared well in advance and progressively implemented. Owners and advisers with limited or no previous experience of drought management should seek advice from qualified advisers. Where drought feeding is the preferred option, it should be started before paddock feed runs out.

Sheep being fed for survival should be observed carefully at feeding times. Weak animals may require segregation for special treatment.

Where minimal water and food requirements cannot be met, sheep should be agisted, sent for slaughter or humanely destroyed on the property. Drought affected sheep are highly susceptible to stress and require careful handling:

(a) if they are unable to rise and walk they should be humanely destroyed on site;

(b) if they go down after limited exercise, they are not fit to travel and should be humanely destroyed on the property;

(c) if they are still able to walk they should be agisted or sent directly to the nearest slaughtering plant; they should not be consigned through saleyards.

**3 PROTECTION FROM CLIMATIC EXTREMES, NATURAL DISASTERS AND PREDATION**

All reasonable precautions should be taken to minimise the effects of weather that produce either cold stress or heat stress in sheep. Freshly shorn sheep and newborn lambs are particularly susceptible. Windbreaks to reduce the effects of cold may be provided in the form of scrub or planted trees, long grass or artificial shelter.

Sheep should be attended to promptly in the event of fire, flood, injury or disease.

Where predation is known to occur, reasonable precautions should be taken.

**4 PROTECTION FROM DISEASE**

Sick, injured or diseased sheep should be given prompt and appropriate treatment or be humanely slaughtered (see Appendix 2). Advice should be sought from qualified advisers.

Appropriate preventive measures should be used for sheep for diseases that are common in a district or are likely to occur in a flock.

Medication, including vaccines, drenches and dips, should be administered in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

**5 FEEDLOTS**

Feedlotting is a situation where sheep are kept in outdoor yards or housed in sheds and hand fed for various purposes, including live export, meat lamb production or fine wool production.

The design, location and construction of a feedlot should take account of topography, climate, age and size of animals to be kept there, space and feed requirements, and labour and management skills available. Adequate provision should be made for cleaning, drainage and waste disposal. All sheep should have adequate access to feeding and watering facilities, which should be maintained in good repair and clean condition.

Special requirements for selection, health, environment, floor space and food and water are included in Appendix 1: Special requirements for sheep in intensive systems.

**6 SHEEP HANDLING FACILITIES**

Well-designed sheep handling facilities, and the ease with which animals flow through them, have important implications for the welfare of the sheep. When new sheep yards are to be constructed, or existing yards modified, expert advice should be sought.

Sheds and yards should be constructed and maintained to minimise the risk of injury and disease.

Passageways, races, entrances and exits should be designed to take advantage of the behaviour patterns of sheep.

The floors of sheds and yards should have surfaces that minimise the risk of injury and disease and allow sheep to stand and walk normally.

Where sheep are held in yards for extended periods, their requirements for food and water should be met.

**7 SUPERVISION**

Owners and their advisers, including absentee owners and their advisers, should ensure that sheep are inspected sufficiently often to maintain them in sound and healthy condition. The frequency and thoroughness of inspection should be related to the likelihood of risk to the welfare of the sheep in relation to food, water, protection against natural disasters and likelihood of diseases, e.g. flystrike.

Housed sheep should be checked by an experienced stock-person at least once each day for signs of injury, changes in food and water intake, illness or distress.

Sheep grazing under more extensive conditions require variable supervision according to the density of stocking, availability of suitable feed, reliability of water supply, age, pregnancy status, climatic conditions and management practices.

## 8 MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

### 8.1 General

A large number of husbandry/management practices is required in any sheep farming enterprise. The consequences of not performing certain husbandry procedures may result in far more pain and distress to the animal than the procedure itself, when it is performed quickly and competently. Restraint used on sheep should be the minimum necessary to efficiently carry out the required procedures.

Practices that cause pain should be applied in such a way as to minimise pain and should not be carried out if practical alternatives can be used to achieve the same results.

Management procedures carried out on sheep should be performed by competent persons or under the direct supervision of an experienced operator.

Relevant hygienic precautions should be undertaken.

### 8.2 Handling and movement

There are times when sheep need to be handled for close inspection or shifted to another place. It is essential that the catcher handle the sheep gently to reduce stress to individual sheep and to other sheep nearby. If drafting facilities are not available, sheep may be caught, but not pulled, by one leg. If carrying is necessary, they should not be lifted by the wool. Sheep should be moved quietly through yards with the minimum forcing by dog or person. Care should be taken with gates to avoid injury to sheep. Precautions should be taken to prevent smothering of closely yarded sheep. Lambs and weaners are at particular risk.

The use of dogs and goading devices for handling sheep should be limited to the minimum needed to complete the procedures. Dogs should be effectively prevented from biting.

### 8.3 Shearing

It is normal practice to shear sheep annually. Additional limited shearing in the form of crutching, wigging and ringing may be required at other times of the year to reduce the risk of flystrike, and to minimise impairment of vision, and the incidence of stained wool.

Because shearing is stressful for sheep, managers should attempt to avoid undue handling and exposure to adverse weather. Sheep should be returned to food and water as soon as possible after shearing.

Where circumstances indicate, shearing cuts should be treated to prevent infection and flystrike.

A sheep's fleece must not be allowed to grow to a length greater than twice the average annual growth for the breed of sheep or more than 250 mm (whichever is shorter).

### 8.4 Dipping

Dips or showers should be constructed, maintained and operated in a manner that minimises injury, disease and stress to sheep.

### 8.5 Paring of feet

Sheep which have poor hoof conformation, or are habitually on soft ground, may require regular foot paring.

Sheep affected with foot disease may need to have diseased tissue pared away by a sharp instrument. The paring should be kept to the minimum necessary to remove affected tissue and should not result in bleeding or severe lameness.

Paring may not be indicated in sheep with feet affected by foot abscess.

Control or eradication procedures should be adopted if evidence of foot rot occurs.

### 8.6 Horn trimming

The horns of rams, stags and some wethers may need to be cut back to avoid injury from an ingrowing horn or to other sheep and to allow free movement through handling races.

The amount of horn removed should be limited to avoid damage to soft horn tissue and associated bleeding. Complete permanent dehorning should only be undertaken under general anaesthesia.

**8.7 Lambing and orphan lambs**

Ewe flocks lambing under grazing conditions should be disturbed as little as possible. However, the flocks should be under adequate surveillance to ensure that ewes having difficulty are given attention and to ensure that other problems, such as pregnancy toxaemia and predation, are not occurring.

Access to a sheltered paddock is recommended for lambing ewe flocks, if the risk of bad weather at lambing is high. Where orphan and stray lambs can be identified they should either be humanely killed or given attention. Fostering is a realistic option; especially on small farms. Some will need colostrum or colostrum substitutes, then milk on a regular basis. Warmth and shelter should be provided. Weak lambs with very little chance of survival should be destroyed humanely.

**8.8 Identification**

When it is necessary to mark sheep for permanent identification, it can be done by tattooing, tagging, notching or hole punching the ear. Electronic methods may also be acceptable. Consignment of sheep should comply with the Victorian legislation with regard to the National Livestock Information System.

In horned sheep, the horn may be hot branded provided care is taken to ensure that the branding does not predispose the animal to infection and does not burn sensitive tissue.

## 9 HUSBANDRY PROCEDURES – SURGICAL

**Minimum standard**

The mulesing procedure must be performed in accordance with Appendix 3 ‘Mulesing procedure’.

Sheep must not be mulesed after 12 months of age.

Castration of rams over 6 months of age must be conducted under veterinary supervision using anaesthesia.

Grinding, clipping or trimming of teeth must not be performed on sheep as a routine flock measure.

**Recommended practice**

**9.1 General**

Surgical procedures may cause pain and stress, which can be reduced with appropriate restraint and competent operators.

Strict attention should be paid to the suitability of the work area in which the operation is to be performed, the catching facilities and the type and amount of restraint. Temporary yards in well-grassed areas can be useful to minimise wound contamination with dirt, dust and faeces and to reduce the additional stress imposed by travelling.

Instruments should be adequately maintained and sterilised prior to use. Proper hygiene should be practised and animals given adequate aftercare. Stock managers should be trained in all surgical husbandry procedures or experienced operators should be employed.

When tetanus is known to be a risk, a vaccination program against tetanus should be considered to prevent the risk associated with surgical procedures.

**9.2 Ear marking**

Ear marking instruments should be sharp, with the cutting edges undamaged, so as to prevent tearing of the ear.

Ear tagging can cause some tearing of the ear if not conducted properly; careful technique will avoid this.

**9.3 Tail docking**

Tail docking may be undertaken where there is significant risk of faecal and urine contamination and/or flystrike, that leads to poor hygiene, health and welfare and/or failing to do so adds a significant cost to the farm system. It should be performed on lambs as early as management practices will allow, preferably between 2 and 12 weeks. Animals over 6 months require an anaesthetic.

Acceptable methods of tail docking, without anaesthesia, are: cutting with a sharp knife; applying rubber rings according to the manufacturer's recommendation; or using a gas flame heated scarring iron according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

The docked tail should be just long enough to cover the vulva in female sheep and be of similar length in the male.

**9.4 Castration**

Castration may be unnecessary if all lambs are to be marketed for slaughter prior to puberty, which generally occurs at an age of 3–6 months.

Where castration is required, it should be performed on lambs as early as management practices will allow, preferably before 12 weeks.

Acceptable methods of castrating male lambs without anaesthesia are by:

(a) cutting: the lamb should be properly restrained and the knife (cutting instrument) should be kept clean and sharp; good post-operative drainage of the wound is required;

(b) rubber rings applied according to the manufacturer's recommendation.

**9.5 Mulesing procedure**

The removal of wool bearing skin from part of the breech area of the sheep (mulesing) provides a high degree of life-time protection against flystrike in the breech area. Pain relief must be used when mulesing. See Appendix 3 for the standard requirements for the procedure.

**9.6 Pizzle dropping**

Pizzle dropping is sometimes performed to reduce pizzle rot, wetting of the belly wool by urine and resultant flystrike in the region of the pizzle. The need for this operation should be considered according to the risk of pizzle rot and pizzle strike, and information should be sought on the correct procedure from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Resources.

**9.7 Teeth grinding/trimming**

These procedures do not have any beneficial effect on health, well-being or productivity of the animals, but do have the potential to cause significant pain.

Corrective manual dental procedures, on individual sheep, may be undertaken to alleviate a specific dental problem if considered to be beneficial to its health and well-being.

**10 HUMANE DESTRUCTION**

Effective and humane methods of destruction which cause a quick and painless death include either shooting with a firearm or by stunning with a captive-bolt pistol (captive bolt penetrating stunner) followed by bleeding out.

**Minimum standard**

| |
|---|
| Sheep stunned with a captive-bolt pistol must be bled out immediately. |

**Recommended practice**

**10.1 Firearms**

A suitable firearm for euthanasia is a .22 calibre rifle or .32 calibre humane killer pistol used at short range but not placed directly on the head. Disadvantages of the use of a firearm are hazards to human safety and the possibility of not being legal on public property.

**10.2 Captive-bolt penetrating stunner (pistol)**

An alternative to the firearm is a captive-bolt penetrating stunner which uses blank cartridges colour coded for the amount of power required for the species of animal being destroyed. The stunner is placed firmly against the skull before firing. The frontal approach as used for firearms is preferred although a poll approach is possible. The concussion stunner (non-penetrating) is not recommended.

The main advantage of the captive-bolt is the safety factor.

The positions and direction of the line of fire for either polled or horned sheep are shown in Appendix 2.

**10.3 Blunt trauma**

Lambs (but not adults) may be stunned by a heavy blow to the front of the forehead to render them unconscious. This should be followed immediately by bleeding out or another technique to ensure death without regaining consciousness.

Blunt trauma should only be used when there is no other recommended option for humane destruction and can only be used on lambs that are less than 24 hours old.

**10.4 Bleeding out**

Bleeding out should be conducted by a skilled person using a sharp knife on an unconscious animal. It is an acceptable method of emergency slaughter of individual animals on-farm.

The method is to lay the animal on its side, draw the head back and cut transversely to the spine just behind the jaw bone. The outcome should be cutting of both carotid arteries.

## APPENDIX 1: SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SHEEP IN INTENSIVE SYSTEMS

**Minimum standard**

Drinking equipment must be inspected daily (or more often in hot weather) to ensure it is operating correctly and that pipes, taps and ball valves are not blocked.

**Recommended practice**

### 1 SELECTION OF SHEEP

Sheep should be carefully observed and those found to be unsuited to the system should be released to paddock grazing.

### 2 PREVENTIVE HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Animals may need to be treated for internal and external parasites before entering an intensive system.

Vaccination with 6 in 1 vaccine against clostridial diseases and caseous lymphadenitis is recommended.

### 3 ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

The site should not be subject to flooding and should be away from fire hazards and relatively protected from adverse weather.

Sheep should not be kept in, or exposed to, any environment where the air is so contaminated with dust or noxious chemicals as to be detrimental to their welfare.

Sheep houses should be designed either for effective natural ventilation, or with mechanical ventilators to assist in the removal of excessive heat, moisture, carbon dioxide, dust, noxious gases and infectious organisms from the environment. Internal distribution of air is required in a manner appropriate to the location of the animals and the design of the building.

Adequate fire fighting equipment should be available to control a fire in any sheep housing shed, building or feedlot.

### 4 FLOOR SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Overcrowding should be avoided. The suggested minimum space allowances for intensively managed sheep are:

| Intensive indoor feedlots | | Space allowance ($m^2$/head) |
|---|---|---|
| (a) | *Single pens* | |
| | Lamb | 0.6 |
| | Wether or dry ewe | 0.9 |
| | Ram, pregnant ewe or heavy wether | 1.0 |
| | Ewe with lamb(s) | 1.5 |
| (b) | *Group penned* | |
| | Less than 8 sheep | 0.9 |
| | 9–15 sheep | 0.8 |
| | 16–30 sheep | 0.6 |
| | 31, or more | 0.5 |
| Outdoor feedlots (shipping assembly) | | |
| | Lambs up to 41 kg | 1.0 |
| | Adult sheep | 1.3 |
| | Heavy wether (fat score 5) | 1.5 |
| | Ewe and lamb(s) | 1.8 |

**5 FOOD**

Sheep being introduced to an intensive feeding system, particularly high starch diets, should be given time to adjust both to the new dietary regime and the troughing. As a guide, conversion to a grain-based diet can be achieved by gradually replacing roughage over a period of 7–14 days. Where sheep are being introduced to a diet containing more than 60% cereal grain, the roughage should be gradually withdrawn over a minimum of 3 weeks.

Adequate trough space should be provided. Where sheep are being fed in groups on an ad lib basis, or where the trough contains food for up to 15 hours per day, a minimum of 2 cm of trough space per sheep is appropriate. Where smaller amounts of food are offered at set feeding times, up to 20 cm of trough space, to allow all sheep to stand and feed at the same time, is needed to reduce adverse feeding competition.

Close monitoring, and identification and treatment of shy feeders should remain one of the manager's major concerns throughout the feedlotting period and especially during the introduction of sheep to novel fodder.

**6 WATER**

Fresh drinkable water in clean troughs should be available in sufficient quantities at all times. Sheep in feedlots may drink up to 6 litres per day during hot weather.

Where nipple drinkers or automatic feeders are used in group penning systems, one drinking nipple should be provided for every 15–30 sheep, with a minimum of two per pen. One watering bowl is required for each 60 sheep. Sheep may need to be trained for a few days to use nipple drinkers.

Where water troughing is used, at least 1.5 cm per sheep is recommended, provided inlet pipe sizes and water pressure are sufficient to keep water in the troughs under all circumstances. Poor water pressure or inlet pipes or thirsty sheep may be reasons for the trough length to be increased. A minimum trough length of 30 cm, plus 1.5 cm per sheep is recommended for mobs of up to 500.

Troughs should be equipped with drain plugs to assist cleaning. Where grain is fed, troughs should be cleaned at least daily.

When an intensive sheep husbandry enterprise is first established or a new water source is used, the water should be tested for minerals and organisms which may be toxic and advice obtained on its suitability for sheep. Information on water testing can be obtained from the local office of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Resources.

## APPENDIX 2: USE OF FIREARM AND CAPTIVE–BOLT STUNNER (PISTOL): RECOMMENDED POSITION AND DIRECTION

### 1 USING A FIREARM

**Hornless sheep and rams**

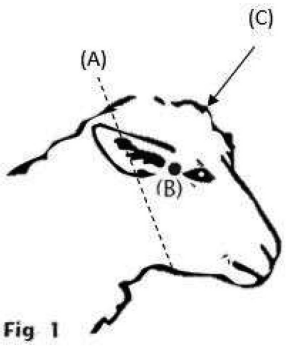


Fig 1

Either:

- aim from just behind the poll to slightly forward of the angle of the jaw of the sheep (A):

or

- aim from the side of the bead at a point midway between the eye and the base of the ear (B):

or

- aim at a point in the middle of the face just above the level of the eyes while aiming along the neck (C).

**Horned sheep and rams**

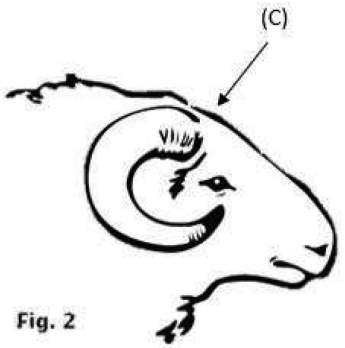


Fig. 2

Aim at a point in the middle of the face just above the eye while aiming along the neck (C).

### 2 USING A CAPTIVE BOLT STUNNER

**Hornless sheep and rams**

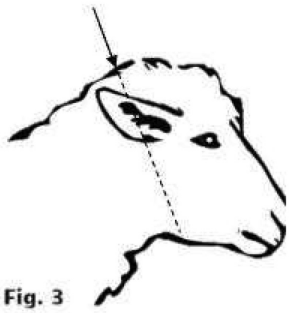


Fig. 3

**Horned sheep and rams**

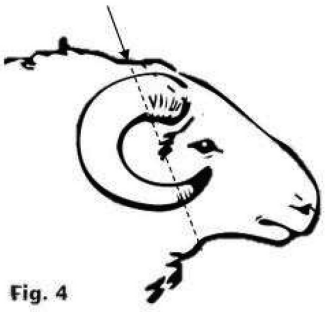


Fig. 4

Place captive bolt stunner firmly on top of head aiming from just behind the poll to slightly forward of the angle of the jaw of the sheep.

N.B. It should be noted that the individual anatomical differences between sheep may not be fully represented in these schematic diagrams.

## APPENDIX 3: MULESING PROCEDURE

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

The mulesing procedure (mulesing) involves the removal of wool-bearing skin from the tail and breech area of sheep. It is intended for prevention of flystrike injury. The procedure is performed as a part of an integrated approach to flystrike management including crutching and shearing, good worm control, strategic use of chemicals, genetic selection and paddock grazing management. It provides a high degree of lifetime protection against flystrike in the breech area.

#### 1.2 Values and principles underlying mulesing

Mulesing will be carried out only in circumstances in which it is clearly in the best interests of the long-term welfare of the animals.

Any person conducting mulesing must be accredited to perform the procedure in compliance with an industry quality assurance management program.

New technology and treatments, including use of pain relief, will be adopted promptly after approval, if shown to minimise risk to welfare, including pain, associated with the procedure.

#### 1.3 Legislation

Legislation in States and Territories covering regulation of veterinary procedures and/or animal welfare must be complied with.

#### 1.4 Indications for mulesing

Sheep producers should carefully consider all options for breech strike prevention in flocks before undertaking mulesing. Mulesing may not be necessary on properties in specific low risk regions, with improved selection and breeding for 'fly and worm resistance', where crutching is conducted 2–3 months before shearing, or where other strategies can effectively prevent breech flystrike.

Key indicators for use of mulesing are:

- The property on which the stock is farmed is regularly subject to a high risk of breech flystrike.
- The breed is Merino or Merino derivative.
- The sheep have significant wrinkle or wool cover in the breech area.
- The majority of the lambs to be mulesed are intended to be farmed as adult sheep.
- The sheep are likely to be sold and kept as adults in areas prone to breech flystrike.

### 2 OPERATOR COMPETENCY

Persons carrying out the mulesing procedure must have appropriate competencies, demonstrated following a formal accreditation process or by other assessment by a Registered Training Organisation.

### 3 SELECTION OF SHEEP

#### 3.1 Health and condition

A pre-operative evaluation of sheep must be conducted.

Animals in poor condition or showing signs of disease must not be mulesed. Poor health and condition increase the risk of post-operative complications and death.

#### 3.2 Age

The recommended age for mulesing is 2 to 12 weeks. Mulesing should be done in conjunction with lamb marking to minimise stress and handling. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as proclaimed drought or other exceptional conditions that prevent mulesing to be conducted at the recommended age, can lambs can be mulesed over 12 weeks of age. Mulesing of sheep over 6 months must be done with anaesthesia.

Additional monitoring should be done for sheep mulesed over 12 weeks of age and any sheep showing signs of infection or ill health should be treated promptly.

## 4 PREPARATION

### 4.1 Weather

Choose a fine, mild day.

Weather extremes should be avoided. Cold weather places an additional stress on lambs. Wet or dusty conditions increase the risk of wound contamination. Windy conditions may interfere with mothering up. Excessively hot conditions can increase bleeding and stress on lambs.

### 4.2 Time of day

Marking and mulesing should be done at a time which minimises the separation of lambs and ewes and allows mothering up to occur as quickly as possible.

Mulesing should be done when fly activity is expected to be minimal.

### 4.3 Stock handling/facilities

Do not drive or stress lambs before mulesing. Let them settle and cool down after mustering and before starting. This will reduce blood loss and aid recovery.

Mulesing must be carried out on clean, well-grassed areas in paddocks that have sufficient feed and water for at least four weeks after mulesing to avoid the need to move mulesed sheep. Wet, muddy, manure laden or dry dusty areas must be avoided to reduce the risk of wound contamination.

Use of temporary or portable yards is recommended to ensure:

1. The procedure can be carried out in an appropriate paddock.
2. The sheep do not have to be moved far immediately after the procedure.
3. The sheep can drift away slowly on release from the yards.

## 5 EQUIPMENT

### 5.1 Cradles

A mulesing cradle must be designed to:

I. Hold the lamb securely in a symmetrical position.

II. Position the hind legs close enough together so that folds of skin can easily be picked up.

III. Expose the rear end of the lamb in a more horizontal than vertical position.

IV. Release the lamb on its feet to prevent contact of the wound with the ground to prevent contamination.

V. Enable effective cleaning and disinfection.

Cradles must be maintained in good working order and be operated with minimal risk of injury to the operator or lamb, especially when loading and unloading.

### 5.2 Shears

Shears used for mulesing must be properly prepared and maintained. Shears may be either bent or straight and must be sharpened and set correctly to allow straight-edged cuts to be made efficiently.

To allow sufficient time for used shears to be cleaned, disinfected and sharpened between batches of lambs, at least three pairs of shears should be used.

### 5.3 Equipment NOT to be used

The following equipment must NOT be used:

- ‘Dunking’ containers must not be used for insecticide application to the animal because the solution becomes contaminated with blood, faeces and urine, which can then be transferred to subsequent animals.

- Paint brushes must not be used for application of insecticide dressings because they gather and transfer blood, faeces and urine to subsequent animals.

**6 HYGIENE**

- Shears must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before initial use and each time they are changed for sharpening.
- Dirty shears must be washed to remove all blood, wool or faeces to permit the disinfectant to work effectively.
- Most disinfectants also have a detergent effect, which will assist with washing. However, if disinfectant is used in the washing process, this must NOT be regarded as having disinfected the equipment.
- At least two containers should be used, one for cleaning dirty shears before immersing them in disinfectant and one for disinfecting shears that have been cleaned.
- Containers must not be chipped, dirty or of a design that harbours bacteria.
- Registered surgical disinfectant must be used, according to label instructions.
- The disinfectant must be changed frequently (as soon as the solution is discoloured) because it will quickly become contaminated with blood and possibly faeces, urine and soil.
- It is not recommended to dip shears in disinfectant between lambs unless the disinfectant is changed prior to it becoming contaminated. If shears become visibly contaminated they should be cleaned and then dipped in clean disinfectant solution.

**7 PAIN RELIEF**

A pain relief product must be used on all sheep that are mulesed. The product must be one that is registered for use on sheep by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

Consult your veterinarian to determine which product, or combination of products, is the best for your circumstances.

**8 FLYSTRIKE PROTECTION AFTER MULESING**

Mulesing should be done when fly activity is expected to be minimal. In rare cases, despite use of insecticides, mulesing wounds may still become struck.

The following measures should reduce the risk of flystrike and the need to use chemicals following mulesing:

- Avoid mulesing when conditions are ideal for flies.
- Sharp, clean equipment must be used for mulesing.
- Encourage rapid wound healing, by removing the minimum amount of wool bearing skin to achieve the desired bare area.
- Ensure lambs are not disturbed, mustered or handled for at least four weeks after mulesing to assist wound healing. However, voluntary movement to adjacent areas is acceptable to allow access to fresh feed.
- If an insecticide wound dressing is necessary, spray equipment should be used to apply a registered product, according to label instructions, immediately after completion of the procedure and before releasing the lamb from the cradle. Dry powder dressings should not be used as they may delay healing.

**9 TECHNIQUE**

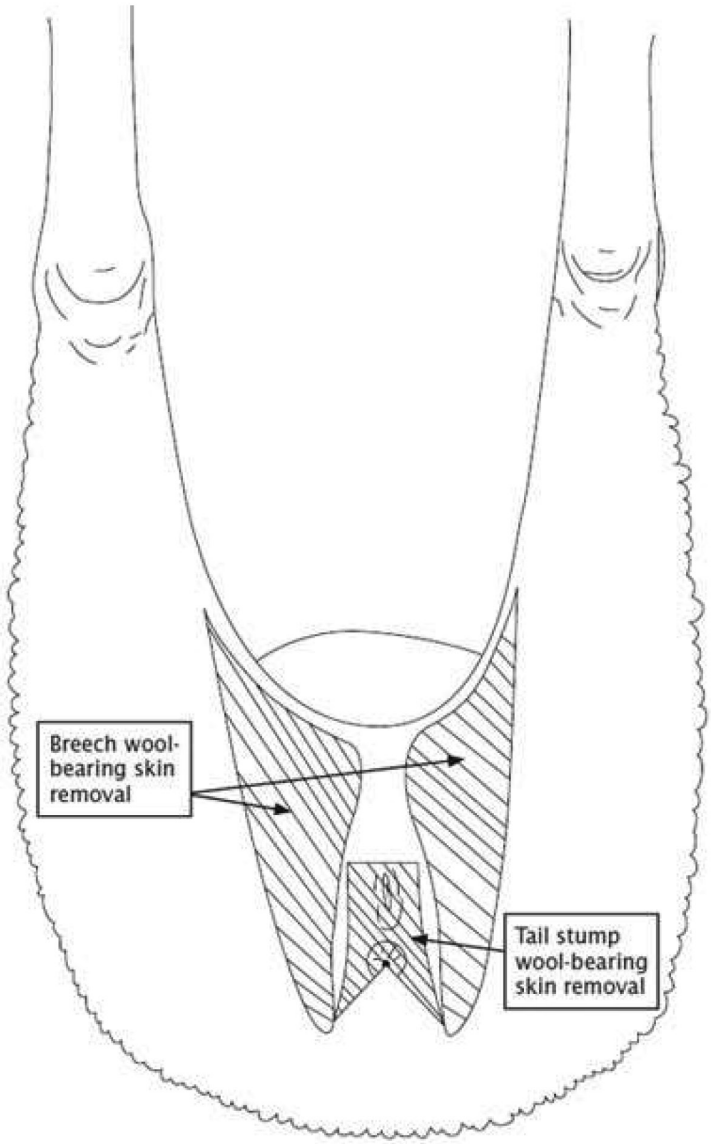
The approved mulesing technique is described in detail in the National Mulesing Accreditation Program.

The principles are:

- Allow the sheep to cool down before operating in order to minimise blood loss.
- The inside edges of the cuts should closely follow the line of the natural bare area. It is critical that no bare skin is removed.

- A thin strip (approximately 2mm) of wool bearing skin should be left between the mules and natural bare area.
- The breech cuts on either side of the vulva, or similar length in the male, must not join each other. A strip of skin from below the vulva to the udder must remain intact, or similar length in the male.
- The minimum number of cuts should be used to achieve the desired result and this will depend on the conformation of the sheep.
- The size of the wound should be the minimum to achieve sufficient flystrike protection.
- The 'V' of the woolled skin left on top of the tail must be within the range of one third to two thirds of the docked tail length.
- The tail of the lamb should be removed as described in section 9.3 of this Code but without the use of rubber rings.
- The cuts should not have any jagged edges. Cuts with jagged edges become a focus of potential infection and flystrike and may delay healing of the mulesing wound.
- Both sides must be symmetrical to avoid distortion of the vulva or tail.
- Only wool bearing skin is removed during the mulesing process. No other tissues such as selvage (muscle fascia – membrane overlying the muscle), muscle, or other underlying tissue are to be removed or cut. Cutting or removing these tissues will cause:
    - Delayed healing
    - More pain
    - More scarring
    - Possible distortion of tissues during healing
    - Possible distortion of the function of tissues after healing.

***Figure 1 Mulesing procedure incisions for breech area***




**10 POST-MULESING MANAGEMENT**

Upon release from the cradle, the lamb should be landed on its feet to avoid contact of the wound with the ground to prevent contamination. Operators should continually evaluate their technique by checking wound symmetry and position as lambs are released.

**10.1 Mothering up**

- After release, the lambs should be allowed to immediately 'mother up' to the ewes. It is recommended that ewes be held in a small holding paddock or temporary fenced yard next to where lambs are released after the procedure. Where the paddock lambs are released into is large, a temporary fence to keep ewes from wandering off can assist with mothering up.

**10.2 Movement**

- If it is unavoidable, ewes and lambs may be moved IMMEDIATELY after completing the operation. They should only be moved quietly over short distances taking less than half an hour.
- Lambs should then not be moved for four weeks after mulesing or until mulesing wounds are healed. However, voluntary movement to adjacent areas is acceptable to allow access to fresh feed.

**10.3 Monitoring**

- Stock should be observed without disturbance at least every 3 days during the healing process. More frequent inspections should occur where the threat of flystrike or other risks are likely.
- Lambs which are abandoned and/or unable to stand up and walk should be given immediate treatment or humanely destroyed whilst minimising disturbance to the remainder of the mob.

## SCHEDULE 3 – ORDER IN COUNCIL – REVISION OF ANIMAL WELFARE CODES OF PRACTICE

## CODE OF PRACTICE FOR TRAINING DOGS AND CATS TO WEAR ELECTRONIC COLLARS (REVISION NO. 1)

**Contents**



### 1 INTRODUCTION

The Code of Practice for Training Dogs and Cats to Wear Electronic Collars (the Code) is made under the provisions of section 7 of Part 1 of the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986** (the Act).

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019 (the Regulations) set out the legal requirements for the use of electronic collars on animals.

The purpose of this Code is to provide the specified code of practice as required under regulations 23 to 28 of the Regulations. The Code specifies the minimum standards required when training a dog or cat to the use of an electronic collar. The wellbeing of the animal must be the first priority in any training program and when using electronic collars on animals.

The standards in this Code are in addition to regulations relating to electronic collar use and do not provide an exemption to the need to comply with those regulations.

The Code and its provisions are to be observed by owners of dogs and cats and by other people who may work with a dog or cat being trained to the use of an electronic collar (such as veterinarians, qualified dog trainers and competent trainers).

Electronic remote training, anti-bark and containment collars are tools used by some trainers and owners to manage unacceptable behaviour or to teach obedience training. The Code sets out the principles that should be used when training a dog or cat to wear an electronic collar including the importance of enabling the animal to predict and control the stimulation.

The Code avoids detailed prescription of training programs as it recognises the wide variability in dog or cat temperament, behaviour and response to training and the need to enable the veterinarian or trainer overseeing the introduction and use of the collar to determine the appropriate training program after expert review of the animal and situation.

## 2 LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ELECTRONIC COLLAR USE

The Regulations set out a number of requirements for the use of electronic collars on animals. Unless those conditions are met electronic collars cannot be used on animals in Victoria.

A summary of some of the requirements of the regulations are detailed below:

- Electronic collars can be used on dogs for remote training, anti-barking or containment purposes and on cats for containment purposes. They cannot be used on a dog or cat under 6 months of age or on any other species except specified livestock species as part of an approved scientific procedure, or program of scientific procedures, approved under a licence granted under Part 3 of the Act.
- Before an electronic collar can be used on a dog or cat a veterinarian must first have assessed the physical and psychological health of the dog or cat and assessed the animal as suitable for the use of an electronic collar.
- Once veterinary approval is given for use of an electronic collar on a dog or cat the animal must be introduced to the use of the collar in accordance with this Code and the collar must be used under the supervision and written instructions of a veterinary practitioner, competent trainer or qualified dog trainer (dogs only).
- Use of remote training and anti-bark collars requires an ongoing review process by the veterinarian, qualified dog trainer or competent trainer within 6 months of first beginning use and then every 12 months after that first review.
- Collars must not be left on a dog or cat for more than 12 hours in any 24 hour period.

**If you are intending to use an electronic collar it is important that you are aware of the full conditions of use.**

If you have purchased an electronic collar in Victoria, you will have been given information in writing about the regulatory requirements of use (this is required by law). Ensure you read this material as you need to be aware of your legal requirements.

Fact sheets are available which detail the legislation, refer to the 'references and further reading' section at the end of this Code for details.

## 3 DEFINITIONS

I. *electronic collar* means an animal collar that is designed to be capable of imparting an electric shock (stimulation) to an animal;

II. *authorised electronic collar* means

  a. in relation to a dog, any one of the following –

    i. a remote training collar;

    ii. an anti-bark collar;

    iii. a containment collar;

  b. in relation to a cat, a containment collar.

III. *anti-bark collar* means an electronic collar designed to modify barking behaviour in dogs and is activated by a dog's bark;

IV. *remote training collar* means an electronic collar that is designed to be worn by an animal to assist in the modification of the animal's behaviour and that is activated by a person through a transmitter;

V. *containment collar* means a method of containing animals to a specific area through the use of a containment collar which may deliver an electric shock to an animal if it gets too close to the designated boundary;

VI. *containment system* means a method of containing animals to a specific area through the use of a boundary wire and transmitter that sends a radio signal to a receiver in a containment collar which then delivers an electric shock (stimulation) to an animal wearing the collar if it gets too close to the boundary wire;

VII. *competent trainer* means a person who is employed by a company that sells containment systems and who is competent to conduct a containment system training program for dogs or cats that complies with this Code;

VIII. *qualified dog trainer* means a person who has completed a qualification approved by the Minister, and published in the Government Gazette, relating to the training of dogs;

IX. *supervising person* means a veterinarian or competent trainer (dogs and cats) or a qualified dog trainer (dogs only);

X. *training supervision* means the planned oversight, by a veterinarian, competent trainer or qualified dog trainer, of the use of the electronic collar according to manufacturer's instructions, to ensure that animal wellbeing is preserved, that training outcomes are achieved and that ultimately the use of the electronic collar can be reduced or stopped completely;

XI. *veterinarian or veterinary practitioner* means a registered veterinary practitioner under the **Veterinary Practice Act 1997**;

XII. *veterinary behaviourist* means a registered veterinary practitioner with post graduate qualifications in animal behaviour.

## 4 IS AN ELECTRONIC COLLAR THE MOST APPROPRIATE OPTION FOR THE SITUATION?

Electronic collars are used for managing behavioural problems as well as for obedience and off-lead training.

Before an electronic collar is used to address problem behaviour such as escape or barking, it is important that the cause of the problem is identified. Animal owners need to first seek advice from a veterinary practitioner, competent trainer or qualified dog trainer who will assess the behavioural problem and provide recommended treatment or training including, where necessary, a referral to a veterinary behaviourist before commencing use of an electronic collar.

Ensure the behaviour is not caused by the animal suffering from anxiety, loneliness, confusion, lack of exercise or boredom as the provision of exercise, enrichment, company (human or animal), removal of behaviour trigger or basic obedience training may be an adequate option for addressing the problem.

Once these factors have been considered, an assessment of the most appropriate training method is then necessary. If an electronic collar is recommended as the most appropriate means of training or of addressing the problem behaviour (as part of a detailed behavioural modification program) then the animal and owner/handler must be trained to the use of the collar in accordance with this Code.

Remember that a veterinarian must first be consulted to assess the dog or cat's physical and psychological health, ideally prior to the purchase of the collar.

If used incorrectly, there can be a number of potential risks involved in using electronic collars to train dogs or cats. These include:

- increasing the animal's fear or anxiety about the situation,
- decreasing the animal's ability to learn,
- associating other, coincidental events with a fear provoking event (e.g. identify child walking past as cause of stimulation),
- not addressing the underlying cause of the problem behaviour so that it continues when the animal is not wearing the collar,
- inducing a new avoidance or aggressive response,
- causing confusion as to which behaviour is required and how to prevent electric stimulation, or
- causing pressure necrosis.

It is possible that electronic collars will have a negative effect on animals exhibiting some behavioural problems. They are not recommended for use on dogs or cats:

- that are displaying aggressive behaviours,
- expressing anxiety or phobias such as separation anxiety or thunderstorm phobias.

They must not be used on:

- nursing or pregnant females,
- dogs or cats with health issues, such as a heart condition, or
- animals incapable of responding appropriately (i.e. old, invalid, distressed or injured animals).

## 5 SUPERVISION OF TRAINING A DOG OR A CAT TO THE USE OF AN ELECTRONIC COLLAR

Veterinarians, competent trainers and qualified dog trainers supervising the training of a dog or cat to the use of an electronic collar, must have relevant experience in the use of electronic collars on dogs or cats. They must be competent to assess the animal's behaviour and to develop an appropriate training program that addresses the problem or unwanted behaviour.

It is the role of the supervising person to physically assess the animal, and its problem behaviour, in the presence of the owner (or person who will be responsible for the animal when it is wearing the collar) before recommending a training program. They must then provide written instructions to the person responsible for the animal and provide appropriate supervision depending on the person's ability and the animal involved. Note: supervision does not require the supervising person to be present at all times, it is up to the supervising person to decide the appropriate level of supervision.

There are many effective methods for training dogs and cats. A veterinarian, competent trainer or qualified dog trainer will be able to advise on the most appropriate method for the individual dog or cat. For any training method it is important to use short, consistent commands.

At all times, those undertaking the supervisory role in the training of an animal must ensure the wellbeing and welfare of the animal is the leading principle.

## 6 USE OF ELECTRONIC COLLARS

There are a number of considerations to take into account when training an animal to the use of an electronic collar:

### 6.1 The importance of timing when using collars

Timing is very important when training animals using any method. The application of the electric stimulation as an aversive or consequence at any time other than during or immediately after the dog or cat has misbehaved or been given a command must be avoided as it will cause confusion for the animal. The only exception is where an avoidance training program is being used (see below).

Timing is particularly important for dog handlers using radio controlled collars where the person has control of the stimulation and when it is applied. By comparison with anti-bark or containment collars the stimulation is automatic in response to the animal's behaviour (for example a bark or the approach of the animal to the boundary).

If the electronic collar is misused, for example by inappropriate or poorly timed stimulation, over a period of time the animal may develop anxious or aggressive behaviour or learned helplessness. Alternatively, the animal may misunderstand which behaviour you are trying to change and instead will amend the behaviour it believes it is being punished for.

With containment collars it is important the animal understands the trigger for the stimulation so other distractions must be minimised when training the dog or cat to wear these collars.

If there are any negative behavioural changes when using an electronic collar, use of the collar must cease immediately and further advice must be sought from a veterinary practitioner or qualified dog trainer.

Animals which are able to clearly associate the electric stimuli with their actions are able to predict and control the stressor and therefore are more likely to have a positive reaction to the electronic collar. They will also learn to avoid the stimulation by correctly changing their behaviour.

**The outcome of any training needs to enable the animal to recognise and predict the collar stimulation so the animal can act appropriately to avoid it.**

**6.2 Avoidance training**

Electronic collars may be used in avoidance training methods, these training methods may also be referred to as escape or attention training. Using these methods, the stimulation may be delivered to get the dog's attention or compliance with a command rather than in response to a particular behaviour. These methods must only be applied by qualified dog trainers, competent trainers or veterinary practitioners trained and competent in the use of these methods. The lowest level of stimulation that the dog responds to must be used.

**6.3 The effect of an electronic collar can vary significantly**

A dog or cat's response to an electronic collar differs depending on the individual animal. Therefore, it is important that when training an animal the collar is set to an appropriate stimulation level that will achieve the required behaviour change. In most cases it will not be necessary to use the highest level of stimulation in the first instance. The supervising veterinarian, competent trainer or qualified dog trainer will provide advice as to the best level to use when training an animal to wear an electronic collar and for any ongoing use.

**6.4 Electronic collars must be used appropriately**

Like all training aids, collars must be used without malice, emotion or anger. Incorrect use can cause tissue injury, physical lesions, physical pain and psychological damage to a dog or cat. In order to gain the desired response, the electronic collar must be used in a kind, calm and respectful manner.

**6.5 Electronic collars must not be deliberately misused when worn by an animal.**

Always ensure the collar is fitted correctly but is not too tight as this can cause irritation or injury. If there is any sign of irritation to the neck of the animal from the electronic collar do not put the collar on the animal until the irritation has cleared or a registered veterinary practitioner has examined the dog and advised the collar can be worn.

If electronic collars are worn for prolonged periods pressure from the contacts can result in skin damage or pressure necrosis. It is for this reason that collars cannot be worn for more than 12 hours in any 24 hour period and owners have a responsibility to regularly check the neck of the animal to ensure that there is no evidence of pressure necrosis occurring.

**7 TRAINING DOGS TO THE USE OF ALL TYPES OF ELECTRONIC COLLARS**

To avoid having the dog associate the stimulus with the collar rather than the behaviour it may be useful to allow the dog to habituate to wearing the collar with the stimulus turned off for a period of up to two weeks. *Note that the same legal requirements apply whether the collar is turned on or off and therefore the collar can still only be worn for a maximum of 12 hours in any 24 hour period.*

Dogs must be watched carefully when the activated collar is first put on the animal and when stimulation is first delivered or received; this is to ensure there is no unexpected and adverse response or reaction. Dogs differ in their responses and so must not be left unsupervised when first being trained to wear the collar and careful observation must be undertaken until appropriate behaviour is observed. This period will be at least one hour in duration, during which time several electronic stimulations may be applied, and until the dog is observed to react without confusion.

If an animal shows an extreme response to the stimulation, such as fear, anxiety, aggression or running away, or does not become accustomed to the collar it must be removed and further advice must be sought from the supervising veterinary practitioner, competent trainer or qualified dog trainer before continuing use. It is recommended that the dog is referred to a veterinarian for a further health assessment as the condition of the dog may require medication to be prescribed.

A leash must not be attached at any time to an electronic collar. If the dog requires a leash during training a flat collar or harness must be used in conjunction with the electronic collar. Ensure the dog is accustomed to being led before using the electronic collar.

It is not recommended that dogs are tethered while wearing an electronic collar. However, if it is necessary that a dog needs to be tethered while wearing an electronic collar it must be done in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Tethering of Animals and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019*. Dogs wearing containment collars must not be tethered while wearing the collar or when being trained to the use of the collar.

**7.1 Additional training requirements for specific collar types**

**Remote collars**

When training dogs using remote collars the stimulation must only be applied during or immediately after the unwanted behaviour or command. The stimulation must not be activated at any other time except if an avoidance training program (refer to earlier section) is being undertaken.

Where possible, introduce the dog to a remote training collar away from distractions and other animals.

Stimulation must only be applied where the dog is in clear sight of the operator so as to ensure the correction is applied at the correct time and only when the unwanted behaviour is occurring.

The trainer must be able to operate the transmitter without looking at it so as to ensure they can concentrate on the dog's behaviour and deliver the stimulation at the appropriate time.

**Containment collars**

When training the dog to use a containment collar minimise any distractions in the vicinity, where possible train in an area away from other animals and only train one dog at a time. This is important as you do not want the animal to associate the stimulation with the wrong cause. For example, a child walking past at the same time it approaches the confinement wire may be associated with the stimulation, rather than the approach to the wire.

An audible warning signal must be activated so the dog is able to avoid the stimulation. They must also have enough space to be able to move away from the containment fence to avoid or stop the stimulation.

A visual barrier or physical reference must be used during training for containment systems or if the boundary wire is moved until the animal has learnt the new boundary.

It is strongly recommended that a physical barrier, such as a fence, is used in conjunction with the containment system, as well as assisting in containment this provides a visual reminder of the boundary. In addition, your local municipal council may not consider an electronic containment system adequate to meet the legal requirements for confinement to property. Owners are advised to check with their local council.

Containment collars do not prevent other animals from entering the property so where there is no physical barrier in place the safety of the contained dog may be compromised. Owners need to take action to provide protection for their animals from other animals (i.e. a straying dog) entering the property.

**Anti-bark collars**

Dogs bark for a reason, and there are many ways that excessive barking can be managed. It is important to identify the reason behind the excessive barking of a dog. By identifying the cause, it is often possible to reduce or stop the excessive barking problem quite simply.

Causes can include loneliness, boredom, fear, anxiety or illness, dogs may be trying to get some attention (even negative attention such as scolding may be preferred to no attention), to warn or alert you of something they see as a potential threat (i.e. postman, movement of people, animals or vehicles outside the property) or because they are cold, hungry or thirsty.

Simply giving a dog obedience training, more attention or some enrichment (toys, walks, etc.), blocking its view of movement outside the property or allow it in the house (or at least in an area where it has regular contact with people) may solve the problem.

A veterinarian, veterinary behaviourist or qualified dog trainer can assist with identifying the problem and providing advice or training to reduce or stop the nuisance barking behaviour.

If an electronic anti-bark collar is being used the dog must be monitored when the collar is first put on to ensure the dog is recognising the cause of the stimulation and how to prevent it from occurring. If the collar is not successful in reducing barking or the dog does not recognise the cause of the stimulation then remove the collar and seek further advice from a veterinary behaviourist, veterinary practitioner or qualified dog trainer.

**8 TRAINING CATS TO THE USE OF CONTAINMENT COLLARS**

Only collars made of stretchy material or with a quick release mechanism are to be used when training a cat to wear a containment collar, this is to ensure the cat can escape if the collar gets caught on something.

Cats must not be left unsupervised when being trained to wear the activated electronic collar to ensure there is no serious adverse response or reaction. Supervision is necessary until they show appropriate containment behaviour.

If an animal shows an extreme response to the stimulation, such as fear, anxiety, aggression or running away, or does not become accustomed to the collar it must be removed and further advice sought from a veterinary practitioner before continuing use.

If training involves putting a cat on a lead the cat must first be trained to wear a harness and walk on a lead before the electronic collar is put on and activated. Leads must not be attached to an electronic collar. If the cat requires a lead during training a flat collar or harness must be used in conjunction with the electronic collar.

Cats must not be tethered at any time including as part of an electronic collar training program. (This is in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Tethering of Animals*).

Cats must be trained to recognise and predict the stimulation so the animal understands the reason for the stimulation and can act appropriately to avoid it.

When training the cat to the collar it is important to minimise any distractions. Train in an area away from other animals and only train one cat at a time.

A visual barrier must be used during training for containment systems or if the boundary wire is moved until the animal has learnt the new boundary.

It is strongly recommended that a physical barrier, such as a fence, is used in conjunction with the containment system, as well as assisting in containment this provides a visual reminder of the boundary. In addition, your local municipal council may not consider an electronic containment system adequate to meet the legal requirements for confinement to property. Owners are advised to check with their local Council.

Containment collars do not prevent other animals from entering the property so where there is no physical barrier in place the safety of the contained cat may be compromised. Owners need to take action to provide protection for their animals from other animals (i.e. a straying dog) which may enter the property.

## 9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

The following documents and contacts may provide further advice or information on the use of electronic collars:

Legislation is available at https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/

- **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986**
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019

Documents listed below can be found at the Animal Welfare Victoria website (animalwelfare.vic.gov.au)

- Factsheet: Electronic collars – anti-bark and remote training collars
- Factsheet: Electronic collars – containment systems
- Factsheet: Electronic collars – conditions for sellers and hirers
- Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Dogs
- Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Cats
- Code of Practice for the Tethering of Animals (Revision 2)

For further advice contact the Australian Veterinary Association or your local veterinary practitioner.

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