

Not a Shocking Experience

Dog Training Expert Shows How to Train a Dog with a Remote Collar

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by Tara Miller

Does your dog turn you into a human kite when out for a walk, tackle people in excitement at the door, bolt out the front door and gallop down the street or bark at every chipmunk or passerby? Dog trainer Robin MacFarlane has seen common behavioural problems like these start to improve within a couple of days if not a few hours.

Last week, dog owners and trainers had the opportunity to attend a seminar by celebrity dog trainer Robin MacFarlane, Training Director of That's My Dog!, presented at Dogzies Canine School of Excellence.

MacFarlane's seminar was on remote collar training. Not to be confused with the harsh stereotype of the "shock collar", remote collars are not a barbaric form of dog punishment in the least. As with most behavioural problems with dogs, the training begins with training the owner.



MacFarlane has been training using remote collars for years and says "when used properly they are just used to get the dog's attention. It's just like when I try to talk to my kids when they are playing video games – they tune me out – when a dog is distracted they tune us out. This is a vibration or a gentle sensation similar to a TENS machine at the physiotherapist to gain their attention."

The collar can act like a vibrating cell phone. When the remote button is pushed the unit, sends a vibration to get the dog's attention. MacFarlane has seen dogs trained just with the vibration alone. Beyond that there is a range of settings, you start at the lowest frequency – some at levels so subtle that the dog can feel it before we would if we were holding the collar in our hands.

When the dog elicits an undesirable behaviour or doesn't heed a command, a press of the button and this sensation gains the dog's attention back to the owner for correction.

"They are tools to help behaviour, not to punish the dog. There's no need for physical punishment – if we've never bothered to teach them what we expect how will they know what to do. I don't like the idea of punishment – physical punishment is an act of frustration not an effective training tool."

MacFarlane, who grew into the field of dog training after working as a veterinary technician in a veterinary hospital where she had the job of holding down a dog for euthanasia because of bad behaviour. "I felt like I had to learn how to help people to avoid that outcome."

The remote collar training is something MacFarlane educates about because of how often it is misunderstood, misrepresented, and misused. Many people purchase a collar and turn it up to high to try and correct poor behaviour; completely the wrong way to use the device. "The idea is not to hurt the dog into obeying but just to get his attention. It's an effective tool that produces quick results. I never have to raise my voice or lay a hand on my dog. It betters your relationship with your dog. "

MacFarlane runs a training facility in Wisconsin as well as the TMD E-Cademy that provides continuing education for professional dog trainers. MacFarlane travels throughout Canada and the US, often as a guest speaker at universities and recently training federal dogs for the Pentagon using her expertise in remote collar training.

In addition to training dog owners and dog trainers alike in remote collar education, MacFarlane has produced a DVD on the subject, A Step-By-Step Guide to remote Collar Dog Training available through her website www.thatsmydog.com as well as through Dogzies.

MacFarlane was invited to give the seminar by Dogzies owner and dog behaviourist, Wayne Dorman. Going into it's fourth year of business, Dogzies offers canine training, day school and overnight stays for dogs. Dorman has travelled all over the world to train with well known and celebrity dog trainers including Cesar Millan and Brian Kilcommons who was recently at the centre.

Dorman believes in drawing information and expertise from multiple renowned trainers in the field because believing there's not just a single tool for training dogs. His facility carries books, DVDs and training aids from the top experts to offer a wide range of proven training techniques for dog owners to reap from.

Dorman who works with many rescued dogs has taken dangerous dogs on the verge of being put down and turned them around. "No matter what we think, dogs are still pack animals. Dog's accept what is, whereas human's give a lot more thought."

With the right blend of training for both owner and dog, Dorman and MacFarlane see happier dogs and owners. www.dogzies.com

