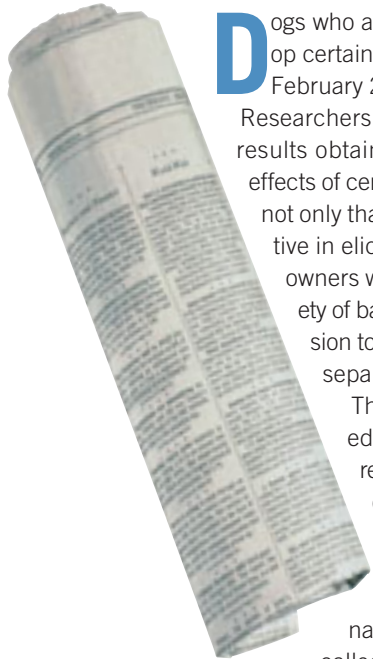


# Punishment Doesn't Work— And May Make Things Worse

## Study finds that dogs subjected to negative reinforcement develop more problem behaviors



**D**ogs who are trained using punishment are more likely to develop certain bad behaviors, according to a study published in the February 2004 issue of the British journal *Animal Welfare*.

Researchers E.F. Hiby, N. J. Rooney, and J.W.S. Bradshaw used results obtained from surveys of 326 dog owners to analyze the effects of certain kinds of training methods. The researchers found not only that rewards (of play, praise, and food) were more effective in eliciting desired behaviors from the dogs, but that those owners who used punishment-based training had seen a variety of bad behaviors in their dogs—including barking at/aggression towards people and other dogs, fearfulness, excitement, separation anxiety, and inappropriate mounting.

The researchers found that dogs' good behavior correlated positively with the frequency of the rewards they received. Dogs who were trained using punishment, alone or in combination with other methods, had the highest percentage of problems related to separation anxiety.

Examining the effectiveness of various training methods in teaching certain tasks—such as eliminating appropriately, sitting on command, coming when called, and walking to heel—researchers found that punishment was never the most effective method. “Dogs trained exclusively using reward-based methods were reported to be significantly more obedient than those trained using either punishment or a combination of reward and punishment,” the researchers wrote.

While the authors noted the possibility that owners of dogs already displaying a high level of obedience were simply more likely to use reward-based training, they also wrote that “regardless of which is cause and which is effect, it is clear that use by the general dog-owning community of punishment-based methods ... does not result in a more obedient dog.”

The authors suggest that the use of punishment-based training might create a state of anxiety or conflict in the dog that is later expressed as a bad behavior. Reward-based training methods, they concluded, “may produce a more balanced and obedient animal.”

—CA

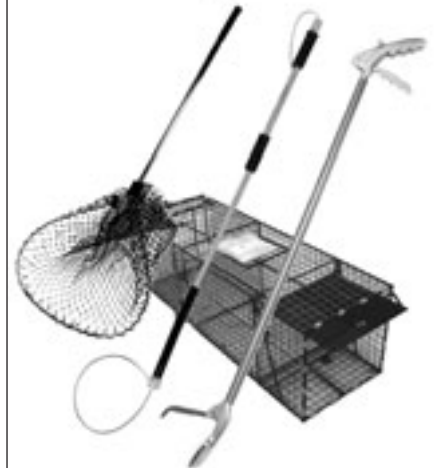


Reward-based training will help this little pooch learn to stop pulling much more effectively than punishment ever could, according to research published in the journal *Animal Welfare*.

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