

Shock collars pulled from shelves in UAE after outcry from dog lovers

Criticism on social media prompts Carrefour to remove electric shock training tool for dogs



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Mena Lopes a Paw Pals dog trainer with her dog Ginger a Portuguese Podengo cross. Chris Whiteoak / The National

Supermarkets removed electric shock dog collars from shelves in the UAE after an outcry from pet owners that the training tools were cruel.

The Dh1,800 Dogtra Fieldmaster training collar was one of several similar items taken off the market after angry dog lovers claimed they encouraged animals to be aggressive.

Cheaper alternatives, such as the Dh535 Petsafe Smart dog trainer, were also removed from Carrefour's online store on Wednesday.

It is the same as progressing towards a kick with a steel-toe capped boot

Dr Sara Elliott

Although manufacturers say the devices deliver a harmless "light tingling sensation" that is surprising rather than painful, the products were criticised by experts as being an outdated method of encouraging certain dog behaviours.

“We have reviewed the listing of the product and found that it was from a third party supplier on our marketplace portal,” a Carrefour spokesman said.

“We would like to reiterate such products are not being sold in Carrefour stores.”

The retailer's marketplace listing policy is in compliance with local and international laws, which do not prohibit the sale of such items, the spokesman said.

“But since this was flagged by our community, it was taken down.

“We are currently taking actions to review our listings policies and update our directory to restrict any future listing of such items.”



The entrance to a Carrefour supermarket in Dubai. Bloomberg

Carrefour said it welcomed customer feedback about its services and products.

Mena Lopes, a full-time dog trainer at Paw Pals in Dubai, said the use of collars could make dogs become more aggressive.

“The collars should not be used at all,” she said.

“There are so many other more proven and effective ways to train your dog.

“It is the same as previous generations getting beaten with rulers in school as a punishment, it is just not acceptable any more.

“We know better now, and it is the same with dog training. These kind of shock collars can do long-term damage, emotional and behavioural.”

Users activate the collars to get their dogs to stop barking when they see another dog, or to encourage them to sit or not jump up.

Behavioural experts said if an animal associates that experience with something painful, like an electric shock, it often leads to worse behaviour farther down the line.

Several social media users complained to Carrefour on Twitter, prompting a decision to remove the devices from a third-party seller via its online marketplace.

“Dogs can give us early signs if they are afraid, or nervous and barking can be one of those indicators,” said Ms Lopes, who is Portuguese.

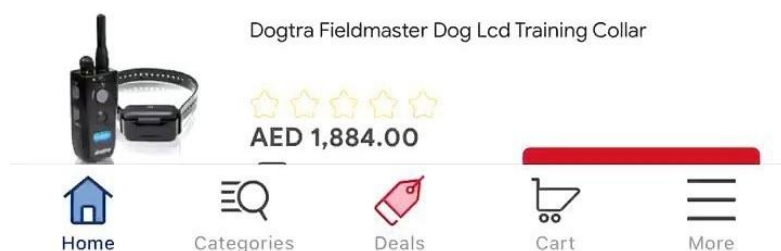
“If we give them an electric shock at this time, it only encourages an aggressive response.

“It is the silent aggressive behaviour that is an issue, when they don’t give any indication there is a problem. That leads to dogs biting without warning and can be dangerous.”

While the industry is regulated in Europe by the Electronic Collar Manufacturers Association, some countries banned the devices altogether.

Shock collars are prohibited in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, Slovenia and Germany.

Some territories of Australia, including New South Wales and Southern Australia, also banned the devices, but there they are occasionally used by professional pest controllers to stop dogs being bitten by highly venomous snakes.



Electric shock training collars have been removed from Carrefour's online market place after complaints they are cruel.

“This is a very old-fashioned training technique, as the pain response is associated with negative behaviour,” said Dr Sara Elliott, founder and director of veterinary services at British Veterinary Hospital in Abu Dhabi, who would like to see the devices outlawed in the UAE.

“These products are promoted as pain-free, but it still stimulates an anxious response from the animal. There is nothing ethical about this in any way.

“It does not solve any issues. Because the strength of the shock can be increased, it will eventually become painful.

“It is the same as progressing towards a kick with a steel toe-capped boot and nothing can condone that sort of behaviour.

“These devices should be taken off the UAE market by law.”

Dr Margit Muller, executive director of the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital, said a dog should be able to establish a bond with its owner, and that would not happen if it is poorly treated.

“A dog has to learn to follow your command, but these collars destroy the confidence of the dog,” she said.

“It is emotional and physical abuse. The dog must trust you and that will only happen when it is rewarded during the learning process.

“The training never stops, it is lifelong. It takes a long time to develop a bond, these collars only make the animals live in a permanent state of fear.”

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