



January 23, 2014

Position Statement on Aversive Dog and Animal Training

Adopted by the Sonoma Humane Society Board of Directors

The Sonoma Humane Society (SHS) supports, promotes and strives to be the foremost advocate for the best policies, procedures, and practices as they apply to the animals of Sonoma County and beyond. Towards the accomplishment of these goals, the SHS Board of Directors adopts the following:

Aversive Training Techniques, also often referred to as “Force training,” are not acceptable methods of training dogs or other animals. Training methods that use force, fear or pain are morally and ethically wrong as well as damaging to the animal and to the human-animal bond, while creating potential hazards for pet owners who may attempt to use such methods. Some of these methods include corporal punishment, choke chains, prong collars, electronic “shock” collars, leash jerks, bark collars, electric fences and verbal punishment through intimidation.

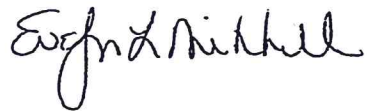
In recent years, there has been much credible scientific study on dog training and behavior modification methods, and their respective efficacy and consequences¹. The preponderance of the evidence resulting from these studies, indicates that training and/or behavior modification predicated upon “dominance theory” and social structures (“alpha,” or “leader of pack”), and the use of physical or mental force, intimidation, coercion or fear is less effective and often creates, as a consequence, potentially serious and unintended adverse behaviors.

Based on this scientific data, we find that “Force Training” does not align with SHS's mission. Therefore, SHS will advocate for and engage only in training methods that are positive and humane and not utilize “Force training” techniques.

¹ American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior 2009. AVSAB Position Statement on the Use of Dominance Theory in Behavior Modification of animals.

We will ensure that all SHS trainers, employees and volunteers utilize positive reinforcement methods with shelter animals, as opposed to force training methods, teach positive reinforcement training methods in public classes, and encourage the public by our example and educate the public in humane animal training techniques.

We adopt this position today, **January 23, 2014** and declare it to be in accordance with the Sonoma Humane Society mission statement: *Ensuring every animal receives protection, compassion, love and care.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Evelyn Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E" and a long, sweeping underline.

Evelyn Mitchell, President
Sonoma Humane Society Board of Directors