

Trainer's secret is vibrating dog collar

BY ALAN SCHMIDT
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A tragic experience with her first dog sent Ami Moore on a quest to find out how not to go through the same episode again.

A German shepherd she got when she was 12 was so out of control, with biting and other bad behavior, that Moore had to have the dog euthanized when it was 7 years old.

"It broke my heart," she recalled. "It led me on my search to try to find the perfect training method."

Moore eventually got another dog and tried everything from using a choke chain, using positive reinforcement with treats, and "the clicker method," where the owner gives behavior cues with a little device that makes clicking sounds.

After years of trying, "I still had dogs that wouldn't come when I called," she said.

A few years ago, Moore found out about Fred Hassen, who created the "No Limitations" dog training system. She went to Las Vegas and saw one of his seminars.

"When I saw him, there was a very fearful dog there that was biting men," she said. "The dog's fear was gone in 15 minutes."

'Tap and tell' method

Moore took one of his classes and became a certified No Limitations trainer. The key to it is a collar, controlled by hand-



Jason Brown/Staff Photographer

Ami Moore (right) consults with Al Kollar and his golden retriever, Buddy, during a dog training conference. Moore trains with a remote that delivers a low-level shock to the dog.

held remote, that delivers either a vibration or a low-intensity electric shock to the dog. The vibration or shock are designed to get the dog's attention, to eliminate any possible distractions between the canine and human, so there can be clear communication.

The "tap" is coupled with a verbal command or a firm yet gentle physical persuasion. With the "tap and tell" method, if you want a dog to sit and stay, you administer a low intensity "tap" and guide the dog into a sitting position.

Hassen demonstrated tap and tell in October during a

two-day training session at the Chicago Canine Academy, 4934 W. Belmont Ave., with Mollie, a 5-year-old English sheep dog. Mollie, brought by her owners from Michigan, was nipping at Hassen, pulling on the leash, yelping, trembling and resisting just about every command. Mollie was also aggressive toward other dogs.

As Hassen worked on "re-programming" the dog, Moore explained that the owner, Niki McGuire, tried private training at home, but "this is a dog who is saying, 'I'm not going to do it and you can't make me,'" Moore said.

"For five years the dog was running the house," Moore said.

After about 15 minutes, Mollie was walking beside Hassen and obeying commands. The dog that refused to walk up and down stairs before was walking up and down a platform without hesitation.

After Hassen turned Mollie back over to her, McGuire said, "Right now she is not fighting me. It was kind of nice. I'd like to see what happens the rest of the day, to see what other leaps and bounds we can make ... But I think it's going to take a lot of practice with her."

To address the aversion some people might have to the idea of shocking a dog to get it to behave, Moore said the intent is neither to torture nor punish the dog.

"It's a very gentle, kind manner to train," she said. "What I do is I start with the vibration. If the dog doesn't notice, I start with the lowest setting. What you are doing is you are telling the dog, 'This means stop what you are doing and look at me.'"

Moore said: "I want the dog to look at me and say, 'Yes, Ami? What can I do for you?'"

By the third day of training, Moore said she could get a dog to be on a leash anywhere. "In five days, I can train a dog to be off leash anywhere, even downtown on lunch hour. I can train a dog in the real world, for today's world."

Moore, who lists her profession as "Dog Whisperer of Chicago," is an author, lecturer, pediatric occupational therapist, adult education instructor, certified Master Trainer, a certified No Limitations Remote Collar specialist, and director of training for Doggie Do Right! 911. In addition to dog training, other services she offers are canine psychological rehabilitation and dog group therapy for "dogs who are suffering from an out-of-balance relationship with other dogs."

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