



Electronic Training Collar Buyer's Guide

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Whoa...WHOA...WHOA!!!!!!! The young dog was at a full run now and well over 100 yards out. He had a nose full of pheasant scent, and no whistle blowing or yelling was stopping him now. Roosters boiled out of the cattails and cackled as they flew across the road and out of sight.

With that deed done, the dog finally heeded his master and returned with his tail between his legs. His face said, "I know, I couldn't help myself." His look was answered with a severe reprimand from his owner.

As a young boy on his first year pheasant hunting, I learned a lot about the behavior of wild birds, the crazy nature of bird dogs, and the poor habits of some dog handlers. I knew even then that reprimanding a dog well after the problem was over was no way to teach the dog not to chase birds; it might only serve to teach the dog not to come back at all.

A dog needs instant positive or negative reinforcement. You can't sit around and discuss their performance with them back at camp. In order to relate they need feedback instantly.

Before electronic collars, once a dog left the check cord, he was on his own to learn what his master meant. Now, advances in electronic training collars have made it easier for both dogs and handlers to learn to work together simply by keeping them in touch, even in a hunting situation.

Many myths and misconceptions about remote training collars have a lot of people hesitant to use them, robbing themselves of a valuable training tool. Used correctly, electronic collars have become one of the most valuable resources any trainer can have. However, picking the right one for you may seem intimidating at first. Many different models are available and after determining the features you need below, you can easily find one that fits your budget as well.

Range

As with any radio transmission, the actual range of a training collar will vary according to terrain and climatic conditions. For yard training, a range of 200 yards will be adequate. However, if you will be running your dogs in the field, slightly more range is needed, and a full mile range is common among hunting enthusiasts. At first, you may not think that a mile range is necessary. However, if your dog takes off at full speed over the hill chasing unwanted game such as a deer or rabbit or worse, heading towards a busy highway, you need the extended range to bring it to a halt.

Stimulation Levels

Different stimulation levels are what bring versatility to electronic training collars. The more levels that a collar has, the more you will be able to adjust the amount of correction given. Then, you can tailor the correction to what the situation requires, which can vary depending on temperament as well as from dog to dog.



Level Adjustability

Adjustability at the transmitter is another feature to look for. To change the intensity level on older collars, you had to get out a special wrench to change the contact points. Since this was a time consuming process, most owners simply put points in that were hot enough to make the dog yelp and left them in for the duration. This does not always render the collar as an effective training aid since the dog may receive more stimulation than the individual situation required.

Now, many models have the intensity level adjustable directly on the transmitter. I find this to be invaluable for several reasons. The main reason is that the same dog will require different levels of stimulation during different scenarios. For example, if my dog is calm, the 90-pound bruiser turns meek on a level 2 pulse. However, if he is on scent or really riled up, it takes level 4 to get his attention.

Not only is this more humane, since you can keep the stimulation down just to the level that gets your dog's attention, but it can also result in a safer situation in the field.

Continuous Stimulation

Continuous stimulation is the traditional method, delivering an electronic pulse for as long as the trainer depresses the button. Most models also have a timeout function set at seven to ten seconds.

Since it is a longer duration than a momentary pulse, the amount of stimulation felt by the dog is much stronger, even when set on the same level. This type of stimulation is excellent for use in a hunting situation. When my dog has a full nose of fresh bird scent and is excited it takes more than a tap to get his attention. He wants to go, and has an entire different demeanor than in a training situation. A quick momentary pulse is forgotten too soon, and the dog continues with the bad behavior. Therefore, most hunters use continuous stimulation to maintain control in situations with numerous distractions to get the dog back on track.



Momentary Stimulation

Momentary stimulation is different from continuous, being a pre-set duration. No matter how long the trainer holds down the button, the dog will only receive a pre-measured "tap" or "nick." This increases the amount of training that can be done with an electronic collar. Dogs, like kids, sometimes have short attention spans, and they either forget to listen, or their thoughts drift away to something they would rather be doing. If the dog is at your side, a simple tap on the shoulder or ear is all it takes to get their mind back on the task at hand. However, if the dog is out at 30 or even 100 yards, all you could do is yell, lay on the whistle, or deliver a high level continuous pulse that may throw the dog even more off track. The addition of momentary allows you to deliver a light nick, which gets the dog right back on track. The pulse is so short that it simply diverts the dog's attention back to the trainer.

This is extremely helpful in situations such as when training a pointing dog to be steady on point or training a retriever to be steady to wing and shot. Continuous stimulation could be too much, and would actually defeat the purpose, causing the dog to jump or surge. With a light momentary tap, you can reinforce the staunchness of the dog from a

distance, without making it break on the bird. It is the same as when you are first training a pointing pup and are at its side petting it as it locks on to a planted bird.

Momentary stimulation also allows you to issue a light reminder, before your dog can commit a misdeed. My dog can be somewhat aggressive and should a dog or cat come into the yard or run across the street, he will often go right for them, even though he has been told "NO." Now, when his ears perk and he is getting ready to bolt, a light momentary tap reminds him that it is in his best interest to stay.

Transmitter Design

In looking for a transmitter, you want a version that will fit your hand well and is easy to operate. Should a correction be needed in the field, you want to quickly give the correct stimulation level that the situation requires. In order for the correction to be effective, it has to be delivered at the instant that the dog needs it.

In yard training situations, you will probably have the transmitter already in your hand and can quickly correct the dog appropriately. However, if you are hunting, your shotgun will probably be in your hands first and foremost. When a dog needs a correction, your transmitter must be at the ready. If it takes you 30 seconds to find it and another 30 to choose the correct level, the situation has expired and the dog would not understand the correction.



Some training transmitters are water-resistant, which is enough to protect them from use in damp conditions in the field. However, a fully waterproof transmitter is a good choice for waterfowl hunters. Then, should the transmitter be accidentally dunked into the marsh, it is fully protected from damage.

Collar / Receiver Design

If a trainer is to be used for hunting, it is a good idea to ensure that the collar receiver is fully waterproof. This will allow it to be fully protected and safe for your dog in any wet weather condition, as well as when fully submerged during water retrieves.

Some of the early collars had external antennas in order to receive the transmitter signal. With dogs going through thick brush, this became the most vulnerable part of the collar. Since then, evolutions in circuitry have allowed designers to place the antenna within the collar body, protecting it from damage in the field while still maintaining up to a mile range on some models.



Manuals and Videos

After picking the collar that best suits you, always be sure to fully read the owner's manual before using the collar on your dog. A training video is also a great help in learning to use the collar effectively. Some collars come with a video to get you started, and many advanced videos are also available at Cabela's.

Used correctly, electronic collars can make the training process easier for both a dog and their handler. With the advancements in technology, there is a collar to fit your dog's personality, your training style, and your budget.

Click here for our complete line of [Electronic Training Collars](#).