



## Stop the Shock: Petco Ends the Sale of Electronic "Shock" Collars, Firmly Establishes itself as the Health and Wellness Company for Pets

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**The company revealed its latest industry-leading milestone with a grassroots campaign and online petition aimed at creating responsible guidelines for the retail sale of shock collars**

A new look declares "Petco, The Health + Wellness Co."

SAN DIEGO, Oct. 6, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Petco today announced it has stopped selling specific electronic "shock" collars, strengthening its commitment to positive reinforcement training methods and solidifying the company's evolution from a leading pet specialty retailer to a category-defining health and wellness partner for pets and pet parents. Recognizing the opportunity to create real change, the company is calling on the industry and consumers to join its movement via an [online petition](#) aimed at creating responsible regulation for the retail sale of shock collars to general consumers.



"Electricity may be critical to powering your microwave, but it has no role for the average pet parent training their dog," said Petco CEO Ron Coughlin. "Shock collars have been shown to increase fear, anxiety and stress in dogs, and we believe there's a better way – Positive Reinforcement Training. As a health and wellness company, our mission is focused on improving pet lives and we think selling shock collars does the opposite. It's our responsibility to ensure that we, and others, aren't putting potentially harmful products in the wrong hands."

The decision, which was confirmed in consultation with the [Petco Pet Wellness Council](#) (PPWC), includes all human- and bark-activated electronic pet collars, commonly referred to as "shock" collars, which have been removed from Petco's in-store and online assortment as of today. Pet parents will be encouraged to try products and services rooted in positive reinforcement training methods backed by experts, including a newly launched online training program, as well as a suite of private and in-home training classes, all led by more than 1,200 Petco Certified Dog Trainers.

"Shock collars are misguided, antiquated, harmful equipment," said Dr. Alexandra Horowitz, MS, PhD, a member of the PPWC and senior research fellow, adjunct associate professor and head of the Horowitz Dog Cognition Lab at Barnard College. "It's great to see Petco taking the lead in removing this merchandise from their stores, in support of their advocacy of positive reinforcement training."

The change also reflects concerns pet parents have today on shock collars. According to a recent study\*, 70% of dog parents feel shock collars have a negative impact on their pet's emotional or mental well-being, while 69% consider shock collars a cruel training method. In fact, 59% of dog parents say they would rather shock themselves than use a shock collar on their dog. In line with Petco's push to affect change on this issue, the same study also found that seven in 10 (71%) dog parents feel there should be limitations on the retail sale of shock collars to prevent human error or abuse, while more than half (51%) say they should only really be used by professionally trained dog trainers.

To underscore its commitment to positive reinforcement training methods, Petco is offering a [free introductory online training class](#) to pet parents interested in exploring positive reinforcement training.

"Science shows animals will learn a new behavior faster and more successfully if they are allowed to voluntarily participate in the learning process and are rewarded for preferred behaviors," said Dr. Whitney Miller, Head of Veterinary Medicine for Petco. "Punishment is not only less successful in changing unwanted behaviors, shock collars have been known to actually reinforce negative behaviors and create anxiety within pets."

In connection with this announcement, the company launched a new look that boldly declares "Petco, The Health + Wellness Co." and reflects Petco's more than 55-year journey to becoming a health and wellness company. A major marketing campaign highlighting the company evolution is slated for early 2021.

Since its founding as a pet specialty retailer in 1965, Petco has led the industry in doing what is right for pets and as a champion for pet health and well-being. In 2014, Petco became the first national specialty retailer to discontinue the sale of China-made treats following consumer concerns about the safety of such products – and other retailers quickly followed. In May of 2019, the company became the first and only national retailer of pet food to stop selling dog and cat food and treats with artificial ingredients, raising the bar for the entire pet retail industry. As an essential retailer during the

ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Petco has served as the grocery store, the doctor's office and the pharmacy for America's pets, delivering on its promise as a partner to pet parents within a dramatically changed landscape.

In addition to today's decision to end the sale of shock collars, Petco will continue to expand services and resources aimed at helping pet parents care for the complete health and wellness of the pets they love, including:

- Providing accessible, affordable and convenient veterinary care via its rapidly growing network of more than 100 full-service in-store vet hospitals – which the company expects to grow to more than 140 by January 2021.
- New and expanded healthcare solutions to minimize costs and encourage comprehensive nose to tail pet wellness for all, including [Vital Care](#) – a paid annual plan helping pet parents proactively cover routine pet wellness needs while earning rewards – and growing [pet insurance](#) offerings to ensure pets are covered for the unexpected.
- A complete redesign of [petco.com](#) and the [Petco app](#) to support digital-first health and wellness resources and solutions for pets and pet parents, including online appointment booking, curbside pickup, same day delivery and more.
- A digital "[Right Food Finder](#)" to help pet parents determine optimal foods for their pets' nutritional needs.
- Completing the removal of artificial colors, preservatives and flavors from food for aquatic life and small animals, such as rabbits, guinea pigs, reptiles and more, by the end of 2021 – a commitment the company made when it implemented the same industry-leading nutrition standards for dogs and cats in 2019. (Exceptions include some bird and ferret foods, which will take longer to find suitable alternatives.)
- Continued review of Petco's business, products, solutions and services to ensure alignment with its mission to improve lives for pets, pet parents and Petco partners.

For more information about Petco's decision to remove shock collars from shelves, visit [petco.com/stoptheshock](#). To download high-resolution images and video content, [click here](#).

#### **About Petco, The Health + Wellness Co.**

Petco is a category-defining health and wellness company focused on improving the lives of pets, pet parents and our own Petco partners. Since our founding in 1965, we've been trailblazing new standards in pet care, delivering comprehensive wellness solutions through our products and services, and creating communities that deepen the pet-pet parent bond. We operate more than 1,500 Petco locations across the U.S., Mexico and Puerto Rico, including a growing network of more than 100 in-store veterinary hospitals, and offer a complete online resource for pet health and wellness at [petco.com](#) and on the [Petco app](#). In tandem with [The Petco Foundation](#), an independent nonprofit organization, we work with and support thousands of local animal welfare groups across the country and, through in-store adoption events, we've helped find homes for more than 6.5 million animals.

*\* From Sept. 15 – Sept. 17, 2020 Edelman Intelligence fielded a 5-minute online quantitative survey that included 1000 nationally representative U.S. dog parents, ages 18+. Dog parents are defined as dog owners who either possess or share primary responsibility for buying products and services for their pets. The margin of error for this study is 2.8 at the 95% confidence level. Edelman Intelligence is a global, full-service market research firm that provides corporate, non-profit and government clients with strategic intelligence to make their communications and engagements with stakeholders the smartest they can be.*

#### **Contact:**

Ventura Olvera  
[ventura.olvera@petco.com](mailto:ventura.olvera@petco.com)  
(858) 453-7845 ext. 222820

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