



P-04-445 Save our Welsh cats & dogs from death on the roads :  
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Chair

This paper is in response to John Griffiths, Minister for Environment & Sustainable Development's letter of 5<sup>th</sup> February to William Powell AM

I must stress that this campaign is about reinstatement of pet containment fencing linked to electronic collars (E-collars) and NOT for dog training E-collars.

1. The Minister refers to a report on electronic collars produced by the Companion Animal Welfare Council (CAWC) in August 2012, where he cites that the Council noted that they ".....*can give rise to both behaviour and welfare problems.*"

Mr Griffiths only used a fraction of the sentence in the report and he has taken it completely out of context. It is wholly incorrect to say this. The full sentence reads:

*"Finally, it is clear that poor contingency between the application of an electrical stimulus and the behaviour to be modified can give rise to both behavioural and welfare problems"*

I spoke to the CAWC council yesterday and they told me that the word "contingency" means "timing of an event". This means that if the electrical correction is discharged at a different time to the pet's unwanted behaviour, it could cause confusion and distress to the animal.

Well of course it would – even to a human being !

2. I must strongly disagree when the Minister writes " *an electric shock is an electric shock*". It isn't – it depends entirely on the magnitude of the shock and whether it is live or static.

Some pregnant women are given TENS nerve machines by the NHS when in labour and this machine sends out electric pulses to the nerves to reduce pain. Also, some overweight people use Slendertone slimming machines pads to assist weight loss and there are anti-wrinkle electric facials too for women who wish to stimulate their facial muscles.

All these machines give out static electrical stimuli - similar to an E-collar.

This is complete contrast to a completely legal livestock fence which sends out a live electric shock of up to 10,000 volts.

Even the CAWC comments on page 7 of its report :



*' There is a moral inconsistency in attitudes towards the use of electric current for the containment of animals, for example, the general acceptance of electric fences to contain livestock*

3. The Minister writes that the Government would review this legislation if there has been a change in the science, but there has never ever been any scientific research into electronic collars used with containment fencing – all the research produced over the decades has only ever been about training dogs with a remote device held by the owner or trainer and these are prone to human error. The CAWC reports makes this distinction very clear, again on page 7:

*“Whilst there are some features in common to all Electric Pulse Training Aids (EPTAs), meaningful distinctions with regards to the risk to animal welfare can be made between:*

*“ those devices which are activated by the animal’s behaviour and those which depend on some other party for discharge of the stimulus”.*

The E-collars for containment fencing only discharge the electrical correction after a series of warnings beeps if the pet approaches the danger zone or road.

It is the animal’s own behaviour which triggers the beeps and after proper training, they avoid the beeps and electrical stimulus completely as was shown clearly in the Welsh/English short film accompanying this Petition.

4. Across the UK it is perfectly legal to use electric mesh-type livestock fence to contain companion pets which :
- a) give no warning and will shock unsuspecting children and adults passing by.
  - b) the pet can get caught up /stuck in it
  - c) gives out live shocks at a far, far higher output than a containment fence
  - e) has no shut-down facility, so if the animal is stuck in the fence it has to stay there and continue to be shocked until it is found.

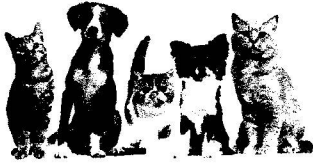
Yet in Wales only, a person who owns a containment fence to keep his or her pet out of danger, could face a fine of £20,000 or go to jail for a year.

Does the Minister agree with me that this situation is utterly absurd ?

5. As there are many containment fences in Wales which were not dismantled as the owners were afraid to lose their pets to the road or other dangers, I would be very pleased to invite the Minister to meet one of my petitioners to



view a containment fence in his own constituency, as I suspect the Minister hasn't had the opportunity to see one in action.



## ADDENDUM

There was additional information and Welsh film presented with the Petition on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Yet, judging from the Minister's letter, this would not have appeared to have yet been digested by him or his officials.

6. It must be reiterated that the shockingly low responses from the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> public consultations, specifically 51 and 18 respectively, (as given in the published summaries) are totally swamped by the all-Welsh signatures of some 500 (mostly within Ceredigion) in my Petition and the then 1,380 + campaign supporters on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/saveourwelshpets](http://www.facebook.com/saveourwelshpets)) now numbering 1,431 today.

The Welsh public has not had its voice heard on this matter until now.

7. There was only one judicial review – not 2 as stated in the Minister's letter. To put this into context, a judicial review is an expensive way to check if a judge has followed the procedures correctly during a courtroom trial.

It has no bearing at all on whether the final judgement was right or wrong.

8. No-one has been prosecuted for using electronic collars in the UK under the Animal Welfare Act of 2006 since it came into force.

*Monique O'Connor  
20th February 2013*