

## Citronella Bark Collars

### What is it?

A citronella anti-bark collar is a lightweight, plastic collar that fits around your dog's neck. There is a micro circuit inside the unit that triggers a miniature valve releasing a spray of citronella whenever your dog barks. There is no shock administered, nor loud sound. The dog feels, hears and smells the unpleasant citronella spray.

Citronella anti-bark collars are advertised as more humane than collars that produce a loud sound or an electric shock. However, if a dog continues to bark even though he is continually sprayed (it can happen) the "humane" aspect of the collar is negated.

### What is it for?

Citronella anti-bark collars are used to discourage dogs from nuisance barking.

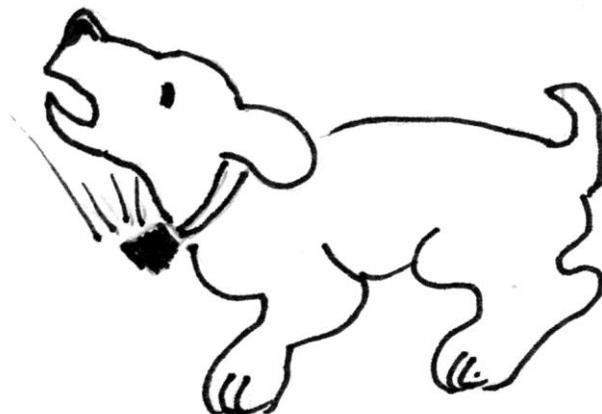
There are several factors a guardian needs to consider before using a citronella anti-bark collar on a dog. The collar may or may not work on your dog. Some dogs become sensitized to the spray, and as soon as the collar is on, they will not bark. This is the intended result. On the other hand, some dogs become desensitized to the spray. They learn that it doesn't cause any real harm so they keep barking. Some dogs learn that if they bark long enough the spray stops because the canister is empty.

Anti-bark collars do not address the reason a dog is barking. By examining the underlying behavioral or environmental issues, the problem barking may be due to mental or physical under-stimulation, being socially isolated or environmental over-stimulation. Punishing the symptom (barking) does not eliminate the cause. Please see a qualified trainer or Behavior Consultant regarding the situation before considering any type of anti-bark collar.

### How do you use it?

After consultation with a dog training professional, you have decided to try a citronella collar.

There are three ways that you can use it on your dog. In the first two methods, the collar is used as a training aid to help teach your dog that **not barking** brings rewards.



**Training:**

**Method A:** Teach “Quiet” Cue

This method will teach your dog that barking when you’ve given the “quiet” cue is not pleasant (he gets sprayed), but when he is “quiet,” a reward comes. **If you use the collar this way**, your dog won’t associate wearing the collar with getting sprayed/punished for barking, so you may not have to keep putting the collar on.

1. **Introducing the Collar:** Attach the collar to the dog **without** spray so he gets used to it being on and nothing bad happens; 1-3 days is best.
2. **Training the Quiet Cue:** Choose a time when you can surreptitiously monitor your dog when he is in a situation where he’s likely to bark.
  - a. Fill the canister and put the collar on your dog. Tell the dog “quiet.”
  - b. Observe for triggers that make him bark — someone walks by or makes a noise.
    - i. If he doesn’t bark, then reward him with a treat party!
    - ii. If he barks and then stops because of the spray, immediately reappear and praise him when he is quiet!
  - c. Tell him to be quiet and leave again.
  - d. Keep repeating the scenario until the trigger doesn’t cause any barking at all, then throw a praise party.
  - e. Repeat the process on subsequent days to make sure your dog learns that barking causes spray while not barking earns rewards.

**Method B:** “Quiet” Cue with Collar Correction

This method will teach the dog that the punishment is coming from the collar. He will stop barking when the collar is on, but not when it is off. **If you use the collar this way**, the dog learns that barking causes the collar to appear. By praising the “quiet” the guardian has trained the dog that not barking can bring rewards.

1. Choose a time when you can put your dog in a situation when he’s likely to bark and you can monitor him. Have the canister ready but do not put it on your dog yet.
2. Tell your dog to be “quiet.”
3. When he starts barking, bring him in and put the collar on (no scolding). Release again telling him “quiet” and wait.
4. This time when your dog barks, he will be sprayed and stop barking. Keep waiting for another bark, spray and stop. When about 1-2 minutes have passed without any barking you reappear and play with/reward your dog.
5. Release him and say “quiet.”
6. Repeat the process. Every time there is a longer period of no barking, reappear and praise your dog.

**Method C:** Collar Correction without Training

This is the least effective method. Simply fill the canister and put the collar on the dog and leave. The dog learns that barking brings punishment. He is not learning that an alternative behavior is rewarding. Some dogs become very distressed and will keep barking even though they are being constantly sprayed.

**Safety Concerns:**

- The collar is NOT recommended for multiple dog households. Barking in one dog can cause a second dog's collar to unfairly emit spray resulting in an undeserved punishment.
- If the dog doesn't connect the punishment (spray) with the cause (his barking) he may mistakenly redirect (bite) whatever is nearest him in a defensive attempt.
- If you decide to try a citronella collar make sure you include a training component as in Methods 1 and 2. With both of these methods the collar is used as a training aid so the dog will learn what you want him to do instead of barking.
- Dogs can become desensitized to the spray and keep barking through the spray until the collar is empty. If this happens, then the "humane" aspect of the collar is negated.
- Heavy coated dogs retain the smell of the spray.

**Training Resources:**

Marin Humane's **Behavior & Training Consultants** are available for consultations (on-site or in-home) regarding training and management tools to curb your dog's barking problem at 415.506.6280 or [OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org](mailto:OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org).

**Remember to license your dog (It's the LAW)!** If your dog gets lost, a license tag on your dog's collar is the fastest way to reunite you and your dog. Even if your dog is microchipped, a license tag is immediately visible and doesn't require a scanning device to read. For more information about licensing, microchipping, and other services provided by **Marin Humane**, visit us at [MarinHumane.org](http://MarinHumane.org) or stop by at 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd, Novato, CA.

