

Why an Electronic Containment Fence is NOT acceptable

Mid-Atlantic Great Dane Rescue League does not accept or approve of electronic fencing. Here's why:

- **Electronic fencing does not protect against other animals and people crossing the Electronic border.** Since there is no barrier to see and nothing to prevent someone from crossing into home territory, danes can be attacked by strange dogs in the "safety" of their own yard. In addition, children and adults may cross over into home territory.
- **Electronic fencing does not prevent other animals from coming into the yard and fighting with your dog**--a fact that vets can attest to because they've had to "patch up" dogs that have been attacked while in their own yards.
- **Electronic collars are not always safe during thunderstorms or with bodies of water on the property.** The cautions needed to protect your dog during, and even more importantly preceding, electrical disturbances (namely thunderstorms) are pretty much the same. You must remove the collars and bring the dog indoors--for the same reason you are advised not to use the telephone during a thunderstorm: the dog can get zapped!
- **Electronic fencing is absolutely no deterrent to dog nappers** who are known to steal dogs from owners' yards while the owners are inside their homes. Even spayed/neutered danes are at risk, as "bunchers" often steal dogs for dog fighting bait and unscrupulous Class B dealers sell them to research institutions or veterinary schools. Regular fencing, while it can be circumvented, provides at least a sight barrier and requires some work to overcome.
- Some dogs will submit to the jolt of the shock when they find the reward of getting to something on the other side a higher reinforcement than the brief pain. **Very few are going to risk another shock, though, to re-enter the perimeter.** When some Danes are spooked, they can become so frightened that they will not even respond to the sound of their owner's voice.
- **Electronic fencing puts no observable barrier between the dog who knows the boundaries and visitors/strangers who can't see them.** Because of all the scare stories about dogs attacking people, more and more people are becoming leery of anything larger than a Cocker Spaniel. Additionally, people are becoming more and more apt to sue homeowners over dogs frightening them - and collecting, usually because insurance companies find it cheaper to pay off a claim than to fight it in court. The result of this action is that the homeowner could well loose his insurance.
- **Dogs can learn to associate people or other dogs with the shock of hitting a boundary marker**, increasing aggression and increasing the likelihood of biting.
- **We've had a dane who was too tall to activate the electronic collar.**

Still think this kind of thing doesn't happen often?

We get more calls than you think regarding problems with electronic fencing and dogs. Sure, most everything you read about them is great--because the literature is designed to entice you to buy an electronic fence. But there are problems--read on.

Note: If requested, names have been changed to [Scooby] to protect the innocent. Also, if date of incident unknown, year reported to me is logged. These entries are in no particular order.

Log of incidences involving electronic fence, started October 15, 2007:

9/08, FL. I have never been a big fan of Electronic Containment Fencing, but today I am sick at heart. Images of a young girl with blood dripping from her face, of another young girl opening her front door to discover the body of her dog laying on her front yard as well as the sound of the shot from the police revolver that killed the dog haunt me. Like many of the homes in our area, our neighbors had decided to use Electronic containment fencing. The boundary ran nearly to the sidewalk on one side and the road on the other side of the home. The owners had very carefully trained their dog to respect the boundary and although we no longer used the sidewalk when walking our own dogs past the house, we never saw the dog cross the boundaries - only bark and charge up and down the length of the yard.

Unfortunately, Electronic containment Fencing doesn't prevent anyone - human or animal - from crossing into a yard so protected. A child might think twice about opening a gate to enter a yard fenced by "visible" material, but most won't think at all before stepping a few feet onto someone's grass. Most folks might think twice about crossing a whole lawn to enter someone's backyard, but who thinks about stepping one or two feet off a sidewalk? So yesterday afternoon, on the way home from school, one of the children in the neighborhood who knew the dog well stopped to say 'hello'. He walked onto the grass to greet the dog. He was accompanied by a girl who adores dogs and she, too, walked into the yard to greet the dog. Then, the girl bent down to kiss the dog. And the dog bit her, tearing her lip badly. The girl's mother called the police and an ambulance. One of the policeman saw the girl covered in blood while her mother screamed "That dog tore her face off". The police then went to the house where the dog lived. The dog was protective of his property, knew he had done something wrong and also knew the police were acting in a threatening manner. He growled and menacingly charged the police; but never ever crossed the boundary of his yard. He was standing in the middle of the yard when the policeman shot him. Shortly after, the young teenaged girl who lived there realized something was going on and opened her front door only to find the dog's body with police cars in the street and police standing in the road.

You could say that no one should ever approach a dog they don't know. That no one should ever put their face close to a dog they don't know well. That no one should ever enter another person's yard without their express permission and in the owner's presence. You can argue that the police should have waited for Animal Control. You can argue that the dog was a Mastiff mix, that the police considered it a bulldog and

dangerous. You can argue, as do the neighbors who knew the dog well, that the dog was actually just a big loveable teddy bear of a dog. You could argue that the dog was large, looked mean and threatening, as large dogs frequently do. You could even argue that Electronic containment Fences don't always work - as the police believe happened in this case. However, my husband was working outside and saw the children inside the yard. Each of those arguments have some truth to them.

But what you can't argue with is that Electronic containment Fencing is basically no protection at all, especially when it is run up to your property lines. It doesn't protect your dog from animals entering the yard. It doesn't protect your dog from humans entering the yard. It leaves your dog to do the protecting. And while that little girl, now awaiting plastic surgery, might have petted a dog through a "real" fence and still been bitten, it is doubtful that it would have been her face that was damaged. It is also doubtful that the police would have felt they needed to shoot the dog on the spot if it had been contained by a "visible" fence. I am writing about this tragedy primarily for the rescue community. I give all of you permission to print it and put it into the packages you give your adopters, to warn them that Electronic Containment Fencing may be cheaper than 'visible' fencing but it might not be so cheap in the long run!! To beg them that, if they must use it, to at least limit the area to just their backyards, not to run it to their property lines. Jacksonville FL Sheltie Rescue, Canine Cushing's Auto-Immune Care, Orange Park FL

7/2008, AZ. So my husband went to Thor's breeders house the other day to deliver feed and he brought back some sad news. Thor's dad is dead at 3 1/2 years old at first I freaked out because I thought it was something genetic but then after hearing the story I was very sad and sickened. Apparently he liked to jump the fence and one day he was hit by a car, he survived and was recovering. Then the breeder decided to tie him to a tether in the backyard and put electronic containment fencing up. As a side note this lady has acreage so it's not a tiny backyard. So when she came home from work one day not only had he jumped over the fence and hung himself but he was also electrocuted..... I felt so sad and sick to my stomach that he had to suffer like that. Hopefully she learned her lesson but I am betting she didn't.

3/2008, MD. I evaluated 2 Danes (both about a year and a half) Sunday - the reason they are being given up - they won't stay in the acre of electric fencing the people put in. They love to go and play with several dogs across the road. Christine in MD.

10/07, PA. Call on the surrender line from man who dumped his dane at a local shelter after the dane bit the DHL delivery man. The dane was apparently on an electronic containment fence and the DHL man came into the fence area (no signposts). The dane bit him. Kathie in PA.

2005, MD. Male dog was being teased by a boy in the neighborhood. Boy knew there was an electronic fence so stayed just outside of the line, teasing dog with a stick etc. Child was around 9 or 10 years old. Owner was home but didn't say anything to the boy, who was a relative. After about 15 minutes, the boy had stopped teasing the dog but he stepped over the Electronic containment fence boundary. The dog bit him! Debbie in MD.

2006, MD. Female dog around 5 years old or so. Owners moved to a new neighborhood that didn't allow fencing and installed Electronic containment fencing. Dog was in her own backyard when the neighbor's small fluffy dog came into the yard because she wasn't

wearing that Electronic fence collar and the dane injured the little dog. The neighborhood was in an uproar about the big bad dog. No one ever considered that the dog was in her own back yard. The owners felt pressured by their neighbors to get rid of the dog.

Both incidents don't involve the dog getting out but someone stepping over the boundary. Debbie in MD.

2007, MD. Man had a boxer (he breeds them) and it went through the fence but wouldn't come back because it didn't want to be shocked. So the owner caught the dog and took the collar off the dog and stuck the collar in his pocket. He carried the dog back, forgetting that he would get the shock because of the collar in his pocket. Yup, he crossed the fencing line and got himself shocked! LOL. Debbie in MD.

2007, MD. Two German shepherds on electronic fencing that routinely failed. Neighbor's two dogs escaped from her yard and one got inside the GSD's yard. Multiple lacerations to one dog, requiring surgery. Other dog now will not approach any neighborhood dog and goes after dogs it was previously friendly toward. Injured dog still recovering. Nancy in MD

2007: Hi, My name is X and my Dane is [Scooby]. A little about the problem I'm having and need help. It started out by jumping the fence and I bought an electronic containment fence. I did a 7 day training with him and as soon as the warning signal went off on his collar, he backed up. He got zapped once and now he doesn't want to go out in the yard anymore. He did his potty in the house and it's a mess. What should I do. I go for walks with him and he is fine after we come back from them, but I can not walk with him everyday since I'm in the military and sometimes I get home real late and the wife has the 3 kids to watch. It is hard for her to take the dog out with the 3 kids. Can anyone tell me how I can get him out to the yard again. I do not use the collar on him anymore and he still doesn't want to go outside. Please I need some help.

2007: Catherine's breeder used Electronic containment fencing. One day a deer ran across their property and all of the Danes went after it (led by Cat's daddy). The "Electronic" fencing didn't stop them from leaving because they were focused on following their prey but it did stop them from getting back into the yard after the chase. She found all of them sitting by the driveway when she got home from the store. Luckily *only one* had been hit by a car (she was young and her leg healed nicely after a few weeks in a cast.). Bobbie in VA.

2007: I tried Electronic fencing years ago and one of my Danes would stand on the line and pee herself. It also doesn't keep other animals out. I would never trust it with great Danes.

2007: She had an Electronic fence for Cooper, the first one and he did fine with it. Never challenged it. But when Luke came along, he continuously challenged it. She ended up putting up a physical fence. It is interesting how different some dogs are. Cooper was very sensitive, cautious and obedient. And Luke was more hard-headed, nothing bothers me and a "jump-in-with-all-feet" kind of dog. Peggy in MD

1996, PA: Before we bought our house, we rented a place. They had no problem with the

dogs but wouldn't allow us to fence so we got an Electronic one. July 4th. We took the dogs out before bed. (we always TOOK them out. They were never out alone) Murf peed and I was petting him waiting for Sasha. Roman candle went off. He bolted. I had my hands on him & wasn't fast enough to grab him. Sasha followed him.

We searched for several hours and couldn't find him. Sasha came back home. (we had turned off the fence.) We finally, exhausted, passed out on the kitchen floor with the door open in case he came back.
Next morning, no Murf.

We went around putting up fliers & in the video store the owner (a volunteer fireman) said a woman last night reported hitting a black pony with her car. We called the police & talked with the officer that worked it to see if he knew which direction the dog went. He said it was a drunk lady that lost control & went in the ditch. He thought she was just making up the pony part. There was no animal there when he got there. Anyway...after 3 days of Pleading prayers & searching & calling we heard one low, weak "woof" when we called out to him, he was stuck in a ravine in the woods unable to walk. Carried him to the car & off to the vet. 2 days of hospitalization, IV fluids (it was early July, it was HOT & he'd been out there 3 days, at least he was in the woods in the shade. The Lord WAS watching him after all.) and 2 weeks of carrying him outside to pee, holding him up with a tote I made, turning him every 2 hours so he wouldn't get sore. He was never the same dog after that. Terrified of just hearing traffic & God forbid a car pulled into the driveway & honked. He always had a slight limp. I've never forgiven myself for being ignorant & trusting his precious life to an Electronic containment fence. Dee in PA.

2007, NJ: Many years ago, my ex had the Electronic fence for his 2 big dogs. The amount of problems were terrible. If there was a storm and the electric went out, they would escape. They tested the fence every day. If they wanted to leave, they would hold their necks out straight and make a run for it. When I spoke to their rep (in NJ) he told me dogs over 100 lbs needed to wear 2 receivers. The battery can shock them if it isn't working properly. Laurie in FL.

2007: What happens on the other side of the e-fence containing a dog guarding it's property? My personal experience in two seperate neighborhoods: While walking two different dogs in two different neighborhoods, I had the same experience. In my old neighborhood, I was walking my dane Madison when we rounded a corner and a border collie mix came charging at its "fence" line barking aggressively. Needless to say, Madison thought this dog was coming after us and w/in a few seconds she was away from me and in the yard fighting w/the other dog. There was NO way I could've stopped this even with the gentle leader she had on. It took seconds to happen. We then moved into new neighborhood last year and I actually took a walk w/out the dogs to see what houses seemed to have e-fences. After canvassing the route, I took our newly adopted puppy for a walk. We were working on basic obedience. Low and behold two dogs came charging from a house (I now know that they have a doggie door) to their "fence" line and it freaked the puppy out. No matter how much socialization/training you do, in that one quick moment where a dog feels they or their person is going to be attacked, a new dog emerges. Linda.

2007, MD: I know of one person who had their dog's collar on him in the house and every time their neighbor's garage door would open, the dog would get shocked. Jody in MD.

2004: As reported by the owners of my first foster (they were 90 years old and going in a nursing home), L'Toro got shocked one time by their electric fence and he would never again go in their back yard (he was 2 1/2 when I had him). Chris in MD.

2007, VA: I know someone dog who was so smart he would sit in the "warning area" of the electronic fence which would just vibrate to warn him he was getting close to the perimeter before getting shocked until the battery in his collar would go dead and then he would simply walk away from the yard. He did this over and over again until they returned the fencing system. Dayna in Va.

2007, VA: I also have a neighbor who purchased an electronic fence and it made their dog so afraid of the shock that it ended up too afraid to even leave the house for any reason! They had to return their system as well. Dayna in VA.

8/2006, VA: Neighbor had two collars on her dogs. one around the dogs waist and one around dogs neck. Dogs got out and had terrorized the neighbors chickens several times and then they killed pet chickens. Taken to court and fined \$500. Judy in VA.

2007, NJ: I had a client who had a pug in Atlantic highlands with an Electronic fence. Her property was deep but very narrow and the fence was run too close to the side of the home and when roofis was in the living room he would get shocked when he went up on the couch or walked too close to the window. The company quickly came back out and fixed the issue by moving the wiring further from the home. Jenn in NJ

2007, NJ: My Rotti was attacked while we were walking around my parents neighborhood by an Australian Shepherd who ran through his Electronic fence twice. He ran the line while I heard the warning beeps, he paced and barked and finally decided he didn't care and came right through it and attacked my dog. Luckily the family was home and ran out to help get their dog off of mine. Though she was big, she was a wimp!! The were very apologetic and within 2 weeks had installed a 6 ft iron fence around their entire property. Jenn in NJ

2007, PA: We have two golden retrievers in our neighborhood who are primarily outside dogs. (They have shelter, food, water and are in good health so animal control can't do anything to make them go indoors) I can't walk Lexi near the house because the electronic fencing runs to the front of the house. Both come barreling towards us aggressively barking/growling which causes her to be defensive and Heidi is afraid of them so I have to avoid that part of the neighborhood which is really annoying because it's in a loop. Please be considerate with neighbors and keep fencing in the back of the yard not the front whether electronic or above ground fencing. Cathy in PA

2007, NC: We had an owner turn-in call a few months ago in Eastern NC - they wanted to turn the dog over to us because the dane attacked and killed the smaller dog he lived with. The dane was inside the electric fence and the smaller dog lived outside the fence. The small dog would run back and forth at the Electronic line, antagonizing the dane. After 3 years of this, the little dog crossed over the line and the dane attacked. Janine in

NC.

2007, NC: One of my neighbors sent a letter to the neighborhood and published it in the neighborhood newsletter asking people not to throw toys, balls, or sticks into her yard. She has a lab and a beagle who live on a corner lot with an electronic fence. They have a fenced in back yard, but the owners leave them in the front yard with the electronic fence. Someone walking by thought it would be nice to throw a tennis ball for the dogs. The nice neighbor didn't know the dogs are resource guarders and the owners came home to two bloody dogs because they had attacked each other over the new toy someone provided. Janine in NC

2007, NJ: Before I became involved with MAGDRL, I was unaware of the issues raised with e-fencing. I live in a neighborhood where several homes have it on their properties. I now appreciate the information I have gotten from this list, and have experienced the negative aspects of e-fences as I have taken my dogs for walks. I see dog aggressiveness starts. When a dog behind these fences begin to slowly approach toward me and my dogs walking, it puts my dogs on a protective and alert mode in anticipation of an attack on us. If I were not able to control my dogs, they would cross the e-fence in a protective aggression towards them, because they equate that dog as a threat to me and them. It seems to me that these fences are a catastrophe waiting to happen. Barbara in NJ

2001, VA. Although there was a fence around most of their yard, my in-laws didn't have a driveway gate, so it was open for coming and going. They had an e-fence installed to keep their fox terrier, Jules, and my husband's Italian bloodhound, Armando, in. The two were an excellent team when it came to tracking & hunting, and they would bolt right through the Electronic line. Luckily, they always came back, but the home was relatively near 66 and some other busy roads. Despite his eagerness to gallivant around the neighborhood, Armando, refused to enter certain rooms of the house, and would only use the back door to go out, and the side door to come back in. He was terrified of being electrocuted inside. After reading some of the other stories, who knows? He might have been at one time. I've always hated the idea of shock therapy for dogs, particularly when it proves ineffective, and when Armando came to 'retire' at our home, this fear was gone. Morgan in VA