



FAQs around the use of e-collars for training dogs to avoid kiwi

Why do we need the training programme?

The kiwi avoidance training programme for dogs is needed to reduce the threat of dogs injuring or killing kiwi in areas where kiwi habitat overlaps with human populations and dogs, or where dogs are taken into kiwi areas for hunting or working purposes such as farm dogs. The programme was developed first in 2006 after a spate of kiwi were killed by dogs in the Coromandel.

Any dog can kill a kiwi, even small dogs or soft mouthed dogs, or dogs of any breed. Dogs have an acute sense of smell and kiwi have a particularly strong scent for a bird. It is therefore natural and instinctive behaviour for a dog to investigate the kiwi smell and any associated movement.

Why are kiwi so at risk?

Kiwi are particularly vulnerable to dog attacks because they lack wings, feathers and muscle in the critical area where dogs may grab kiwi in their mouths. The death of a kiwi by a dog is therefore not necessarily just from being mauled or from infection from deep bites, both of which are visible injuries, but rather death may occur because of crushing, causing internal bleeding.

How many kiwi are killed by dogs every year?

It is unknown how many kiwi are killed by dogs each year (but we do know it is too many). This is mainly because if a dog kills a kiwi it is unlikely to bring it back to the owner. Sometime the owner may also not report that their dog has killed a kiwi.

The issue of dogs killing kiwi is not just in situations where hunting dogs are taken into the bush where there may be kiwi. Dogs are also a risk to kiwi in places where people live close to kiwi habitat or even where kiwi wander into people's back gardens such as in Northland. Some owners also take their dogs for a walk-in areas where there are kiwi. Others may take their dog on boating holidays and bring the dog ashore to have a run and go to the toilet. It is not just ferocious looking dogs that can kill kiwi – any dog can kill a kiwi and it can happen in just a short time of the dog being out of sight.

A tragic episode occurred in Waitangi Forest in the Bay of Islands, where a single dog is believed to have killed about 500 kiwi over a six-week period in 1987. This was not an isolated incident. A study in central Northland from 1994 to 2008 recorded dogs responsible for 22 (50%) of the 44 deaths of adult birds.

FACT: The life expectancy of a kiwi in Northland living in areas close to farms or where there is active hunting is about 13 years compared to around 40 years where there are no dogs.

Also, recently in the Coromandel 8 kiwi were found to have been killed by dogs over a period of a few months. We know this because the kiwi were being monitored using radio-transmitters as part of a breeding programme. Fortunately, recent developments in forensic techniques now enable the DNA found in saliva around the bite marks on the dead kiwi to be analysed to detect what type of animal killed the kiwi and are sensitive enough to identify the actual individual – this means that a

particular dog can be identified in the same way that DNA fingerprinting works to identify humans of crimes.

Is it all about saving kiwi?

No, training a dog to avoid kiwi is not just about saving the kiwi, it is also in the best interests of the dog. Kiwi are absolutely protected by the Wildlife Act (1953) and as such any dog that harms or kills wildlife can be destroyed. The Dog Control Act (1996) also enables the destruction of any dog found to have injured or killed any protected wildlife such as a kiwi, and the owner to be fined \$20,000 and/or 3 years in jail.

Who should get their dogs trained?

Dogs with jobs, or dogs that are going to be in kiwi areas because they work there, or live there, should be trained.

It is important to remember that having a dog kiwi avoidance trained does not make it 'kiwi safe'. Pet dogs should not be taken into kiwi areas, regardless of whether they have been trained or not. Because kiwi and dogs just don't mix the best way to avoid kiwi injury or death is to keep dogs out of kiwi areas.

What does the kiwi avoidance training for dogs involve?

The kiwi avoidance training session involves the owner walking their dog through a pre-set course where the dog encounters a variety of kiwi stimuli, these may include kiwi poo, fresh kiwi bedding, and a dead kiwi or taxidermied kiwi model. The dog receives a correction from the e-collar when it shows interest in the sight and/or odour of kiwi stimuli and this causes the dog to associate kiwi with an unpleasant reaction and avoid kiwi if they encounter one in the future. Most dogs respond quickly to the training and only require correcting a few times along the course. 87%

of dogs remember the training one year later (Dale et. al. 2013), and many dogs for more than two years.

How often will the training need to be done?

If the dog is successful with the training session, s/he will be issued with a 6-month certificate and added to the 'Kiwi Avoidance Training' database'. After 6 months the dog returns to be tested and if successful (i.e., does not show interest in the kiwi props) will be issued with a certificate for 12 months. The dog then only needs to be re-tested every 2 years. To pass a training or testing session the dog needs to demonstrate that it is still showing avoidance to the kiwi stimuli, this is usually recognised by the dog not looking at the stimuli, turning away and/or walking widely around it.

What do I get for the training?

- A certificate of proof of training.
- A sticker to put on your dog's travel box.
- Your dog and its details added to a national data base.
- Assurance that you are being a responsible dog owner.
- Reduced registration rates in some areas.
- Able to obtain a permit to hunt with a dog where it is necessary to demonstrate the dog is kiwi avoidance trained.

Does my dog need to be tattooed or branded?

No, not unless you choose to, but it is necessary to be able to identify your dog/s in the future. Dogs are now required to be micro-chipped to be registered. If the dog is not already micro-chipped, then some trainers are able to do this at the training. If you are not comfortable with having your dog micro-chipped, then an identification photo can be taken of the dog at the training.

Where and when are training sessions held?

A list of approved kiwi avoidance dog trainers, how to contact them, and training schedules is listed in the directory for kiwi avoidance trainers on the Kiwi Avoidance Training website.

<https://www.kiwiavoidancetraining.nz/>

Why are electric collars or e-collars used?

E-collars are used because they are an effective, quick technique to train dogs to avoid kiwi.

When used correctly by an experienced trainer, the e-collar also allows the dog to be deterred from a stimulus without associating the unpleasant feeling with the trainer or owner.

Why have e-collars been banned in the UK?

Many people in the UK are advocating for e-collars to be banned as a training tool for dogs. This is because there have been incidences where the e-collar has been used inappropriately on a dog as a punishment and has caused the dog harm. Unfortunately, banning the e-collar will not prevent irresponsible dog owners mistreating their dog – they will simply find another way to punish.

Are there alternative ways to train a dog to avoid kiwi?

Yes, but none that are proven to be effective without considerable training and time. There are a few other techniques that have been suggested as alternatives to the use of e-collars for training dogs to avoid kiwi, these include **reward** training or

reinforcing positive behaviour, a **Citronella** training collar, and the **e-kiwi**.

Reward training involves the owner rewarding the dog for positive behaviour such as when it avoids kiwi stimuli. Depending on the dog the rewards may be praise, food or play. Reward training requires a great deal of effort and time from the owner which many people are unable to commit to – the dog may also associate doing the ‘right thing’ when it is in the presence of the owner and can be rewarded.

Citronella flavour is a known deterrent for dogs. **Citronella** training involves the dog wearing a collar which sprays citronella into their face when the dog displays adverse behaviour such as barking. It is a technique that has not been well accepted by dog trainers. Kiwi avoidance training requires a dog to be trained off the scent of the kiwi. Using a citronella spray on the dog when it displays an interest in a kiwi stimulus may confuse the dog by mixing scents and overwhelming the smell of a kiwi which needs to remain the focus.

The effectiveness of an **e-kiwi** is still being trialed. E-Kiwi are a ‘kiwi like’ ball which administers an electric shock when the dog touches it. E-Kiwi differ from an e-collar as the dog associates the shock deterrent with the kiwi prop and there is less risk of the dog associating the unpleasant feeling with the owner, trainer, or collar.

Save the Kiwi and DOC are researching alternative kiwi avoidance training props and methods. Until we can prove the effectiveness of other techniques, the e-collar is the best option.

Do e-collars cause long term damage to the dog?

No, if used correctly there is no long-term damage to the dog.

The kiwi avoidance training is run by trainers who are accredited with the programme. Trainers have been selected for their proven experience with dogs and

who only use the e-collar according to the manufacturer's specifications.

Electronic collars are not intended to be used as a punishment, but as a deterrent to train negative or unsafe behavior out of a dog. The shock administered by an approved shock collar is safe, so while it is certainly enough to get the dog's attention and deter certain behaviours, it won't do any lasting physical harm.

How else are e-collars used?

Electronic collars are most used for off-leash training. However, some dog trainers and pet owners also use an e-collar for behavioral issues such as food aggression, or aggression towards other dogs.

In some countries shock collars are used to teach dogs to stay away from dangerous animals like snakes.

Does the training actually work?

Yes, with most dogs.

A study in 2013 found that 87% of dogs showed avoidance to the kiwi training stimuli at least 1 year after training and this was also the case when the dog was re-tested without wearing an electric collar (Dale *et al.* 2013).

However, the training is not a silver bullet – it does not work with all dogs and it does not mean your dog is 100% safe around kiwi. Some dogs may behave differently when out of sight of the handler, or if they become lost and hungry.

The training sessions are also beneficial because they provide an opportunity for dog owners to obtain information about the dangers of dogs to kiwi and the value of having their dog/s kiwi aversion trained.

Where can I learn more about kiwi?

Visit the Save the Kiwi website to learn more about kiwi

<https://savethekiwi.nz/about-kiwi/>

References

Dale, A.R.; Statham, S.; Podlesnik, A.; and Elliffe, D. 2013. The acquisition and maintenance of dogs' avoidance responses to kiwi (*Apteryx* spp.) training stimuli across time and locations. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 146 (2013) 107-111.