



# Boarding, Daycare, Grooming, Behavior Counseling, Training, Wholesome Pet Foods & Quality Supplies

*Helping you and your pet become best friends for life.*

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## ON BEING PET FRIENDLY

When selecting a place to take your pet for boarding, daycare, grooming, training or behavior counseling it is very important that you ensure that specific pet care business is "pet friendly." Green Acres has always prided itself on being such a facility; however, I believe it is important that pet guardians realize not all people in this business operate as we do. The following are a few examples of what we consider to be unacceptable and unethical behavior on the part of some people in the pet care business.

Recently I read an article in *The Whole Dog Journal* where a pet guardian was astonished to find that the daycare where she had been taking her dog for six months was using an electric shock collar on her dog. Sadly, this lady's previously well adjusted dog is now very fearful of other dogs. Fortunately she has now found a "pet friendly" daycare, but the damage to her friend has been done. And if you think this could never happen in Maine, it has.

A few years ago we had a client who needed to board their dog and we were filled to capacity. They ended up boarding their dog at another facility. Their dog, which was always anxious in new situations, started stress barking shortly after they left. Without the client's permission, someone at that kennel put a bark collar on their dog which gave her an electric shock on her throat every time she barked. Obviously, this made her even more anxious and started a vicious cycle of a bark followed by the pain of a shock. This facility told the client what they had done when they picked up the dog, but failed to see the grave error they had made.

Over a recent weekend I read several messages on an email list for those in the kennel industry. List participants are kennel owners or managers. One person posted a message asking how others deal with dogs that bark while at the kennel. She was frustrated that a particular dog kept barking day and night and that it was "annoying her".

Some of the suggestions other kennel owners and managers offered were frightening! One suggested she squirt the dog with water whenever it barked. Another indicated that they routinely put bark collars on dogs when they stay at their facility (these collars give

the dog an electric shock on the throat when it barks). A further suggestion was to muzzle the dog to keep it quiet.

I advised the person complaining that; 1) dogs barking are part of the business and if you're in the business you need to accept that, and 2) barking is a very complex behavior and dogs bark for many reasons; however, in a kennel or Daycare situation continuous barking is probably due to stress or boredom. All of the suggestions she had been given involving punishing the dog (squirt bottle, shock collar, & muzzle) were likely to make the dog more stressed and had great potential to make the dog fearful and aggressive. I suggested putting the dog in another run where it might feel more secure, putting a crate in the run with the dog, giving them extra exercise, providing them with a stuffed Kong, or using a stress reliever like a Dog Appeasing Pheromone diffuser or Bach Rescue Remedy.

As a "Pet Friendly" facility Green Acres pledges that we will NEVER intentionally do anything that will cause your best friend any sort of physical, mental or emotional trauma. If your pet is stressed we will tell you, and while in our care will do everything we can to reduce or alleviate that stress, not contribute to it.

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