

'Dog Whisperer' Training Approach More Harmful Than Helpful

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DENVER, Sept. 6 /U.S. Newswire/ -- The training tactics featured on Cesar Millan's "Dog Whisperer" program are inhumane, outdated and improper, according to a letter sent yesterday to the National Geographic Channel by American Humane, the oldest national organization protecting children and animals.

In the letter, American Humane, which works to raise public awareness about responsible pet ownership and reduce the euthanasia of unwanted pets, expressed dismay over the "numerous inhumane training techniques" advocated by Cesar Millan on "Dog Whisperer."

Several instances of cruel and dangerous treatment - promoted by Millan as acceptable training methods - were documented by American Humane, including one in which a dog was partially asphyxiated in an episode. In this instance, the fractious dog was pinned to the ground by its neck after first being "hung" by a collar incrementally tightened by Millan. Millan's goal - of subduing a fractious animal - was accomplished by partially cutting off the blood supply to its brain.

The letter requests that National Geographic stop airing the program immediately and issue a statement explaining that the tactics featured on the program are inhumane, and it encourages National Geographic to begin developing programming that sets a positive example by featuring proper, humane animal training. In its letter, American Humane said: "We believe that achieving the goal of improving the way people interact with their pets would be far more successful and beneficial for the National Geographic Channel if it ceased sending the contradictory message that violent treatment of animals is acceptable."

"As a forerunner in the movement towards humane dog training, we find the excessively rough handling of animals on the show and inhumane training methods to be potentially harmful for the animals and the people on the show," said the letter's author, Bill Torgerson, DVM, MBA, who is vice president of Animal Protection Services for American Humane. "It also does a disservice to all the show's viewers by espousing an inaccurate message about what constitutes effective training and appropriate treatment of animals."

Torgerson noted that the safety of a woman and her German shepherd were jeopardized in one episode by the use of an electric shock collar, which forced the tormented dog to redirect its aggression at its owner, biting her arm. "Furthermore, the television audience was never told that Mr. Millan was attempting to modify the dog's behavior by causing pain with the shock collar," he said.

For more information about humane training techniques, please visit www.americanhumane.org.

About American Humane

Founded in 1877, the American Humane Association is the oldest national organization dedicated to protecting both children and animals. Through a network of child and animal protection agencies and individuals, the American Humane Association develops policies, legislation, curricula and training programs to protect children and animals from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The nonprofit membership organization, headquartered in Denver, raises awareness about The Link(r) between animal abuse and other forms of violence, as well as the benefits derived from the human-animal bond. American Humane's regional office in Los Angeles is the authority behind the "No Animals Were Harmed"(r) End Credit Disclaimer on film and TV productions, and American Humane's office in Washington is an advocate for child and animal protection at the federal and state levels. American Humane is endorsed by the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance and has been awarded the Independent Charities Seal of Excellence. Visit

