

I write a seasonal newsletter for my clients, you can download it on my fees & forms page. There was a distressing article in the Spring 2012 edition that is pasted below. I'd like to add some additional facts and thoughts on this issue.....

"This is an entirely TRUE story! I was inside making a cup of coffee when I heard Tom & Jerry both SCREAMING. I ran outside to find them hooked together, with Jerry stuck to Tom's collar, and as a result it was clear Tom was choking. I couldn't get Tom's collar unhooked, so I thought of scissors, which were inside. Somehow I got the two of them inside, still screaming, and bleeding from somewhere, while Tom's breathing continues to struggle and slow. In battle mode, and praying out loud, I thought I was going to lose my battle. Couldn't even get the scissors in between Tom's neck and the collar. Suddenly my son showed up like an angel, I forgot he was home on Spring Break. With his help I FINALLY found and unclasped the collar and Tom gasped for breath. Rest assured they went to the vet that day and both are fine! More on this on my website under "In My Humble Opinion", but the end result is I don't collar them at home, a tough decision."

So, to give some additional facts, at the time I assumed Jerry had a tooth stuck in Tom's collar. When I took them to the vet, Jerry wasn't so agreeable to allowing a thorough oral exam, his mouth hurt! So, it was a few days later I noticed a scar on his bottom lip, THAT'S what was stuck and that's where the blood was coming from that day. As for dear Tom, boy we came so close to losing him that day. At the vet that day, he found both of Tom's eyes were completely bloodshot, which is indicative of being choked. He never lost consciousness, and thank Goodness, hasn't shown any signs of permanent damage.

Now to address the "hidden dangers of collars", and the decision I've made to leave their collars off at home, matter of fact they haven't had them on again since this incident. I use harnesses to walk them and take them places, although if they need identification I'd put on their collars with their tags. My current obsession is to walk around our yard and check that there are no holes in the fence or under the fence, my little digging Terriers! They are both chipped, but the thought of them out running around in the world makes my stomach turn.

This is a very personal decision that each dog owner needs to make according to their circumstances, and their dog's activity level. In Tom & Jerry's case, they tend to zoom around the yard and tackle each other. When they had their collars on, they became part of the game, it was Jerry who grabbed Tom's more frequently and I'd thought of the possibility of a broken neck, because Jerry is about 5 pounds heavier than Tom. I'd also heard the stories of dogs choking, but mainly with "choke" collars on, not so much regular collars. Anyway, I'd been discouraging the behavior, but they'd do it in the yard when I wasn't present.

I would encourage dog owners who take their dogs to dog parks, or doggie daycare situations, to consider taking their own dog's collar off before going to tussle and play with the other dogs. There are "break-away" collars, but they are controversial and have been known to come apart when the owner DOESN'T want them to come apart! If you'd like to check this out, I've located this one at PetsMart, it seems Premier is the leader in this area.

<http://www.petsmart.com/product/index.jsp?productId=3060844>

In my case, this happened so quickly and the result was almost devastating. Not having their collars has changed the way my boys play together, Tom has a better advantage and is much quicker. However, Jerry now has to be quicker as well and he's getting more exercise. They get down in the "play position" more often, and do lots of running and dodging. The Denver Broncos could use them on the field!! :-)

Use your best judgement, and of course the endless love you have for your dog(s) to make the best, most informed choice possible. Also, speak to your vet for more good advice!!

Keep checking back for more stories, and ongoing puppy news!!
Thanks so much, Patti