

CASE STUDY

Catching the Dog

The Challenge

When getting a dog, the owner has to decide how to keep the dog in the yard. Adding a fence or underground wiring can provide peace of mind, but it can also be expensive and inflexible. Inventor Rodney Landers, a founding partner of Lab 65l, was inspired to create a more flexible solution while watching *Star Trek* one night: “What if we could use GPS to mark off a fenced-in area, and have the dog carry around the device as part of its collar?” GPS would give owners flexibility on setting the boundaries and would not require any major digging in the yard.

After eleven patents, the GPS-based collar and fence concept, called the Skyshepherd, was born.

An Easier and More Humane Approach

The beauty of a GPS dog collar is that an owner can mark off any area they want as an enclosure by simply pressing a button and walking the perimeter. The device is not limited by the shape or number of square feet. “It’s flexible, too: the perimeter can be changed at any time to exclude a garden, to bring the dog to the park, or to a friend’s house,” Landers says.

Landers worked closely with co-inventors Kevin Nieuwsma, a pet industry expert, and Chad James, a dog training and behavioral aficionado, to design a feedback system for dogs that would be more humane than the traditional electric shock dogs receive with underground fencing. He collaborated with Troy Pongratz, also a Lab 65l founding member, to create a collar and housing that could hold the electronics and give dogs more gentle feedback using nerve stimulation instead of the traditional prongs that worked on a muscular level. Nieuwsma, who’s worked with dogs for over 20 years, disliked the idea that dogs often get a sudden shock as they cross an underground fence, with no warning. Landers, Nieuwsma, and James devised a system where there are three tiers of warning: an audible one, then an audible and light physical sensation, and finally a full sensation.

Good Boy, Fido!

In addition, James wanted to give dogs positive feedback. “We use a special, pleasing tone that occasionally beeps when the dog remains in the area,” he explains. If the dog leaves the zone, the device uses positive reinforcement to guide it back, instead of shocking it as it crosses into the zone again.

Feedback from testers has been overwhelmingly positive. “I love being able to take my dog anywhere and not even need a leash!” says Jennifer Harnish, a product tester. “I have a five-acre lot: the cost to go with a traditional fence would have been astronomical. Now, my dog can roam free and we can go anywhere with Sugar.”

Developing connected devices is our specialty at Lab 65l. Contact us for your next project at www.Lab65l.com.



Lab65l