

Nuisance barking



Barking that is excessive and significantly interrupts other people's lives is nuisance barking.

Barking becomes a nuisance when it lasts for over three minutes in any hour or more than one minute twice in a night.

Council Officers will also investigate if more than one home is impacted by the barking.

Top 10 things to do:

1. When leaving your dog/s for extended periods of time, ensure they are comfortable and happy by providing a dog bed, adequate supply of drinking water and things for them to do.
2. Get a house sitter when you go on holidays so your dog is kept in familiar surroundings.
3. Keep your dog occupied with fun, interactive toys with treats hidden inside.
4. Consider training sessions, obedience classes and/or puppy preschool.
5. Keep your dog inside (or in an enclosed space) during the night.
6. Give your dog plenty of exercise including walks and fetching games.
7. Where possible, restrict the dog's visibility through the fence.
8. Take your dog to the vet for a health check to rule out a health issue.
9. Reward your dog for good behaviour.
10. Get your dog desexed.

If you have tried everything in this factsheet and our website, you may need to speak with a dog behaviourist to come up with a long-term solution to the unique reasons your dog is still barking.

Top three things NOT to do:

- **Don't shout** at or smack your dog for excessive barking – it does not work.
- **Don't ignore it** – if you don't find and address the reason, the dog will continue to be a nuisance.
- **Don't leave your dog alone** for long periods – why not try dog walkers or a doggy day care?

Why do dogs bark?

Boredom – Being alone with very little to do for extended periods of time can lead to boredom, frustration and loneliness for dogs. Bored dogs also show other anti-social behaviours like trying to escape, chewing, digging and other destructive behaviour.

To avoid boredom you need to give your dog plenty to do when it's alone.

Recommendations

- Try interactive toys that hide food and require manipulation to obtain the food reward. Cut a few squares in the side of an old drink/milk container and place dry biscuits inside. These can be left in the yard for your dog to play with.

- Give your dog a bone or a toy with frozen mince. This will teach your dog that when you leave there is a positive reward (the bone or treat).
- Leave an article of clothing with your scent on it. This can work especially well for puppies.

Disturbances – When people walk past your fence or come to your door, your dog may sense an ‘intruder’ and bark. The person leaves or continues walking by and the dog thinks it chased the intruder away with its bark.

Recommendations

- Remove the direct line of sight between your dog and other animals and people walking past.
- Attend a dog obedience school with a qualified dog behaviourist and follow their advice.
- Try interactive treats.
- Train your dog on a loose lead as it has many benefits.

Excitement – Anticipating a walk, playing games, playing with children, seeing people in their backyards and hearing their owners arriving home can often excite a dog.

Recommendations

- Turn your back until it has settled down then calmly reward your dog.
- Socialise your dog as early as possible and get them used to different places and people.
- Regularly walk your dog and change the time of the day and the route you walk.
- Spend time playing with your dog at random times.

Anxiety – Dogs are ‘pack’ animals and regard their owners and family as their pack. When dogs are left alone they may fret and become anxious and can often bark for extended periods of time in an attempt to communicate with the missing members of their ‘pack’. When dogs bark because of fear or anxiety, it is very important to work on reducing anxiety levels as early as possible. This will be a great benefit to your dog, your family and the community.

Dogs can become fearful or anxious of people such as the postman or objects like the neighbour’s lawnmower. Perhaps introduce your dog to the postman or sit and give them a pat near the fence when your neighbour is mowing. Specific fears may need a specific and novel solution.

Recommendations

- Try leaving your dog alone for short, random periods of time (two minutes, 20 minutes, four hours, etc.). Your dog will not know when you are returning, but you always do.
- Don’t make a big fuss when you return home and spend time with them after they settle down.
- Avoid routine by carrying your keys at different times and not only when you’re leaving for work.
- Turn on the television or radio on when you leave home or give your dog an item of clothing that belongs to you.
- Avoid stimulus by distracting your dog with another form of reward at the time it normally barks.

Discomfort – Illness, pain and discomfort or being restricted to a small area may cause barking.

It is the owner’s responsibility to provide their dog with enough space to move freely in an enclosed back yard (from which they cannot escape). They should not be left on a fixed chain. Dogs left chained or tied up may find it difficult to get exercise or reach water to drink.

If your usually quiet dog starts to bark excessively, check the environment and perhaps take a trip to a vet for a health check.

What happens next?

Excess barking can take time to resolve. Council asks that you take a proactive role in trying to reduce any nuisance barking that may be occurring. If a neighbour lets you know your dog is barking, keep them informed of solutions you are trying and get their feedback to know if things are improving.