



All dogs bark, but some barking dogs become a real neighbourhood nuisance — greatly reducing the quality of life for their neighbours and increasing neighbourhood tensions. Barking is the most common animal behaviour problem council is asked to deal with.

Ongoing barking is often a symptom of another problem. Taking time to understand what makes your dog bark is the first step towards solving the problem, both for the dog, and your neighbours.

#### WHY DOGS BARK

- >> Dogs are social animals and often bark when they are lonely.
- >> Separation from an owner can cause dogs to stress.
- >> Barking may also be the result of boredom and frustration.
- >> Barking is a dog's way of seeking attention from its owner.
- >> Dogs bark out of fear — this can be fear of people, objects or other dogs.
- >> Dogs bark when there is a threat to their territory.
- >> Playing with your dog often stimulates barking.
- >> Some breeds have a reputation for barking.

#### YOU CAN CONTROL BARKING

The most important first step is to work out why your dog is barking. Once you know the symptom, you can find the cure.

Barking can be controlled through several small behavioural changes. Some behavioural changes could be as small as walking your dog twice a day to relieve boredom.

Dogs are social animals and require a certain amount of interaction on a daily basis. If your dog barks when you are away from the premises, it is probably due to loneliness.

If you can let your dog inside the house, provide your dog with a single room where odours relating to you can relax the dog.

A fence that is correctly designed to restrict your dog's vision can assist with helping to reduce barking levels.

Obedience training and discipline are also very important when trying to stop a barking problem. A dog can be trained to be alone, and to bark only on command.

#### IDEAS TO HELP ENTERTAIN YOUR PET AND STOP BARKING

**QUIET TIME** - Fill an empty ice-cream container with water, place a bone in the middle and freeze it. When you leave for work, tip the frozen contents out in a shady place in the yard for your dog. He/she will spend hours sitting licking the water and chewing the ice to get to the yummy bone. This is also good in the summer months to keep your dog hydrated.

**BRAIN GAMES** - Using an old plastic bottle or plastic sauce bottle, cut small holes just big enough for your dog's food to fall out of. Instead of feeding your dog from his/her bowl, place the food contents in the container and put the lid on.

To be able to eat the food your dog will have to use his/her brain, as well as other skills, to move the container around the yard to get the biscuits to fall out. This is very stimulating for your dog and will keep him/her amused.

**ENRICHING OUR YARDS** - Hang his/her favourite toy from a low lying tree using "bungee rope" (a rope which stretches and retracts). Your dog will love this as he/she will be playing tug a war by themselves, but will feel like someone is playing with him.

You can also try an obstacle course with old cardboard boxes and household items that you can set up and teach your dog.

You need to give your dog an area where he/she is allowed to dig. This may be in a garden or a sandpit you have made for him/her. You can try burying a bone in this area for your dog to sniff out.

A small sandpit shell filled with water in a cool area of your yard can also be very entertaining for your pet. You can place a dog toy in the water and watch your dog have fun bobbing it around whilst cooling off on a hot day.

**HIDE AND SEEK** - Before you go to work lock your dog away so he can't see what you are doing, then hide treats around your yard in several different places. By doing this your dog can sniff out the rewards throughout the day whilst you are at work. This is a fun game for your pet and at the end of the day you will be able to see how good your dog's nose really is. You need to start with simple hiding places to begin with until your dog learns what the game is about.

**BACK TO LIFE** — If your dog has an old bone that they have lost interest in, try flavouring it with a small amount of peanut butter. This suggestion is particularly ideal for hollow bones. Your dog will love you forever and could lick these bones for hours to savour the last hint of peanut butter.

Get to know more about the breed of your dog. All breeds of dogs require stimulation but many breeds like to learn things. These dogs need more mental stimulation and exercise.

Dogs are like kids and soon get sick the same games and the same toys. Try rotating your toys and games regularly to keep your pooch entertained.

There are so many good ideas out there that you can do with objects around the yard and that cost nothing. Contacting your local vet, pet shop, behaviourist or even the internet will give you some more great ideas.

Be adventurous and look outside the box. Just remember safety for your pet, variety and interaction. Using shoes and clothing as toys should be avoided.

## DOG BARKS - WHAT DO I DO?

Talk to your neighbour as soon as the problem arises. They may not be aware that their dog is barking or that their dog's barking is bothering you.

Give your neighbour this information and if the barking persists after a week or two, speak with your neighbour again to provide feedback.

If your neighbour is unapproachable, or does not agree that a problem exists, you should contact council for further advice.

## EXCESSIVE BARKING

Excessive barking is an offence and council staff will respond to reported barking problems. If a dog barking exceeds five (5) minutes of accumulated time in any hour.

If the problem continues and further complaints are reported, the council will investigate.

Irresponsible owners who fail to comply with council recommendations will face significant penalties including on the spot fines.

Council Rangers are available to address barking concerns within the community, working to reduce the noise and minimise disruption caused by barking dogs.

## MORE INFORMATION & CONTACTING COUNCIL

If you require any further information about this or any other responsible pet ownership issue, please call Council's Customer Service on 6568 2555.