



Fact Sheet:

Nuisance Barking Dogs

All dogs bark but some barking dogs become a nuisance. Excessive barking is one of the most disruptive neighbourhood issues and requires immediate attention.

Why do dogs bark?

It is important to try and determine why your dog is barking. Dogs may bark because they are:

- Hungry, thirsty, cold, hot, in need of exercise or perhaps sick or injured.
- Bored.
- Seeking attention.
- Threatened or protecting their territory.

Check to see if your dog:

- Has access to clean fresh water and adequate shelter.
- Has daily exercise and is not sick or injured.
- Is provided with marrow/brisket bones to chew several times a week.

Boredom

Excessive barking is more common with some breeds than others.

Some breeds – such as cattle dogs, kelpies, border collies and German shepherds – were originally bred to work on farms and may have problems adjusting to a suburban backyard.

You should carefully select a breed that is suitable for your lifestyle. Long walks on a lead may not be enough to keep some dogs occupied. They may become barkers through boredom and frustration.

To help ensure your dog does not become bored, make sure it has plenty to do when left alone. For example:

- If your dog likes water, place water in a child's pool, or garden pool, so the dog can play in it.
- Use old drink bottles or milk containers that are half filled with water or stones so your dog can roll them like a toy. These containers also make a good chew toy if left empty.
- Give your dog a bone when you leave the house, this will teach your dog to look forward to receiving something nice and create a positive, rather than negative, reaction when you leave the house.
- Provide a variety of toys (balls, chew toys, something to climb on, food reward toys).
- Leave a radio playing or a television on where the dog can hear it.

Attention seeking behaviour

Dogs are social animals and may use inappropriate behaviour or cause a nuisance, such as continually barking, to seek attention. Ensure you spend time each day communicating and playing with your dog. If possible, allow your dog to rest beside you as you work at home.

Protecting its property

Most dogs will bark if a person or an animal is near their territory. To help prevent your dog barking at things it can see beyond the fence, you may like to:

- Cover the fence or gate to a suitable height with material which obstructs its vision.
- Prevent the dog having access to the area on your premises where the dog tends to bark (i.e. by blocking access down the side of a house or to the front yard).

What if my dog is a nuisance barker?

There is no quick fix or easy solution to problem barking. Don't yell at or hit the dog for barking as this may cause other behaviour problems. Instead:

- Consult your local veterinarian, dog obedience club or animal behaviourist for advice on the best approach for your situation.
- Some dogs have behavioural problems such as separation anxiety, which requires specific treatment and behavioural modification.

What can I do if I live near a dog that barks excessively?

Dog owners are often not aware of their own dog's excessive barking.

- Firstly, the owner should be approached directly and the problem explained to them. It may help to provide them with times the dog is barking.
- Secondly, if your neighbours are unapproachable or do not agree there is a problem, a complaint should be made to the rangers at your local government.

What will rangers do when I make a complaint?

Local governments are responsible for enforcing the nuisance provisions of the *Dog Act 1976* and each Council may take a different approach to dealing with complaints.

In the first instance, rangers need to be satisfied that a nuisance is being created.

He or she could do this by talking to neighbours, observing behaviour, using a bark count collar or asking you to keep records.

What if the barking continues?

If the barking problem continues, and further complaints are lodged, the ranger may issue a noise abatement notice which requires the owner to abate the noise. This notice has effect for six months.

If the owner does not comply with the notice, they may be issued an infringement notice of \$200 or be taken to court, where a penalty of up to \$5,000 may be issued.

Higher penalties apply if the dog is a dangerous dog.

What if I make a false complaint?

Making a false report (for whatever reason) may result in civil court action being taken against the complainant for a false declaration.

Where can I get more information?

For more information visit the Department of Local Government and Communities' website at: www.dlgc.wa.gov.au/dogs or contact your local government.

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LG021-0314