

Nuisance Barking Dogs



All dogs bark but some barking dogs become a nuisance. Excessive barking can become one of the most disruptive neighbourhood issues if not rectified by a dog owner.

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 or 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.



Food, water and shelter

Most dogs like routine so it's important to feed a dog at a regular time otherwise the dog may get irritable. Ensuring the dog is fed good, wholesome food ensures that the dog does not get prematurely hungry which can also lead to a dog becoming irritable. A dog should always have access to clean, fresh drinking water to ensure that it doesn't become dehydrated.

Dog owners should ensure that a dog always has adequate shelter out of the weather, away from rain and out of direct sunlight.



Exercising

It's very important that dogs are regularly exercised especially if the dog is very active. Dogs who aren't regularly exercised can become bored at home very quickly and can start barking to seek attention from their owner. Dog toys can also keep the dog amused throughout the day if the owner isn't going to be home.

A dog should never be tied up or confined to a compound or cage for any extended amount of time. Not only is this cruel for the dog, but it can lead to greater behaviour problems.



Protecting its property

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

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



Attention seeking behaviour

Dogs are social animals and may use inappropriate behaviour or cause a nuisance, such as continually barking, to seek attention. Dog owners need to spend time each day communicating and playing with their dog. If possible, the dog owner should allow their dog to be with them when at home, working outside etc.

Frequently asked questions

What if my dog is a nuisance barker?

There is no quick fix or easy solution to nuisance barking. Dog owners shouldn't yell at or hit the dog for barking as this may cause other behaviour problems. Instead, the dog owner should:

Consult their 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 will Rangers do when a complaint is made?

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.

Rangers could do this by talking to neighbours, observing behaviour, using electronic monitoring devices or have the complainant keep records of when a dog barks and for how long a dog barks each time.

What may be done with a dog that barks excessively?

Dog owners may not be aware of their dog's excessive barking.

A person who is concerned about a dog's excessive barking can initially approach the dog owner directly and explain the problem to them. It will help to provide the dog owner with times the dog is barking and how long the dog is barking for each time.

If a person thinks that the dog owner may be unapproachable or thinks that the dog owner disagrees that a problem exists, the person can report the dog barking to Ranger Services.

What if the barking continues?

If the barking problem continues, and further complaints are lodged, a noise abatement notice can be issued which requires the dog owner to abate the noise.

Once issued, the noise abatement notice has effect for six months.

If the dog 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.



Where can I get more information?

More information can be obtained by contacting Ranger Services on (08) 9531 7709 or visit the Shire of Murray website at: Barking » Shire of Murray or scanning the QR code.

