

FACT SHEET

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?

Try to 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 or a dog obedience club 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. Contact companies that specialize in dog behaviour products, such as the Dog Line.

Living near a dog that barks excessively – what can neighbours do?

Dog owners are often not aware of their own dog's excessive barking. Firstly, the owner should be approached directly and have the problem explained to them. A tape recording of the dog barking may help to substantiate any complaint.

Secondly, if your neighbour is unapproachable or does not agree that the problem exists, then a complaint should be made to the Community Ranger who can help with barking problems so that you do not have to suffer the nuisance caused by dogs that make too much noise.

Nuisance barking – penalties apply for non-compliance and false complaints

Nuisance barking is an offence. The on-the-spot fine for allowing your dog to bark persistently is \$100. Community Rangers will respond to reported barking problems. Initially, the owner may receive a letter from the Ranger to provide the owner with helpful advice. If the barking problem continues, and further complaints are lodged, the Community Ranger will investigate. Irresponsible owners who do not comply with the Ranger's recommendations may incur significant penalties. If taken to court, the fine could be up to \$2000 with a daily penalty of \$200 for each day the nuisance continues. Complainants who make false reports, for whatever reason, may incur civil court action for false declaration.

More information

For more information or to report a nuisance dog, please contact the City of Kalgoorlie Boulder Community Rangers.