

WHY DOGS BARK



What you can do - assess the problem

- What makes your dog bark?
- When, where and why does my dog bark (day/night), when I'm not at home?
- What happens after my dog barks? Does there appear to be any form of stress release for the dog?
- Is the behaviour normal for my dog?
- Is my dog's behaviour learned or conditioned?
- How long has my dog been barking?
- How did the behaviour problem start? What were the circumstances?
- Look at the length of time this behaviour has been going on; has it been gradual, or is it occasional or progressive?

Once you have assessed yourself, your problem, and your dog, and have determined why your dog is barking, you can then decide what you can do to prevent your dog barking and becoming a neighbourhood nuisance.

Some dog owners find it useful to keep a diary or log of their activities and their dog's barking. This may be useful to pinpoint when and why your dog is barking.

Sometimes it is difficult to determine the cause of barking. Your dog may be unpredictable. The barking may just be a bad habit, it may be attention seeking or in response to something you can't see. An alternative is to seek professional help.

There are also numerous websites that will provide possible solutions and information in this brochure may be able to help provide you with measures that will help you control the barking.

You can also contact Council's Animal Management Team who may be able to provide further suggestions on measures that can be used to control barking.

What Council can do

Council will appoint an Officer who will:

- Be assigned the customer enquiry
- Speak with the complainant to gather more information about the dog's barking behaviour
- Letter sent to complainant with suggestions on how to possibly resolve barking issue
- If a barking problem continues, complainant to complete a diary that is sent back to Council to establish if a nuisance exists in accordance with the Local Law
- Contact the owner /responsible person for the dog to discuss possible solutions and inform them of their responsibilities
- Monitoring of dogs barking behaviour to gather evidence
- As a last resort the officer may serve an infringement penalty notice and instigate legal actions against the dog owner /responsible person

For more information please contact Burdekin Shire Council on 4783 9800 or go to Council's website www.burdekin.qld.gov.au

Managing BARKING in our community



**A community issue ...
A shared responsibility
A team approach**

WHY DOGS BARK

Introduction

Dogs are an important part of our local community, but dogs that bark excessively can become a source of irritation and intrusion for neighbours and others in the local area. Dogs that bark continually can also create friction between neighbours.

Council receives a number of noise complaints regarding barking dogs. Our Animal Management Team believes that the majority of the barking dog complaints can be resolved without Council involvement.

We encourage people to approach the dog's owner in a neighbourly manner and discuss their concerns. In most cases the dog's owner may not be aware of the barking or realise it is annoying to you or others.

Why do dogs bark?

Barking and howling are their natural means of communication. So what is your dog trying to tell you? The dog is generally barking for a reason. Excessive barking is an indication that something is wrong. If you wish to reduce your dog's barking, you need to understand why he or she is barking.

1. BOREDOM & LACK OF EXERCISE

The main cause for barking is boredom - a big backyard is not the answer to reducing a dog's boredom. Being alone with very little to do for extended periods of time can lead to boredom, frustration and loneliness for dogs. Dogs have a great deal of energy and most breeds were bred for a specific purpose, such as hunting, guarding and working. Bored dogs also show other anti-social behaviours, like trying to escape and being destructive - chewing and digging.

2. ANXIETY

Dogs are "pack" animals, which means they enjoy living in groups. The dog regards its owners and family as its pack, and will bark in an attempt to communicate with the

Methods of control

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- Contact Dog Breed clubs
 - Avoid conditioning – do not reward your dog for bad behaviour
 - Companionship – before leaving home, turn on the television or radio, or give your dog an old coat or item of clothing that belongs to you
 - Never call your dog after it has stopped barking and then punish it
 - Increase physical exercise
 - Regularly walk your dog and change your route
 - Take your dog for a drive
 - Spend FUN time with your dog
 - Avoid routine, e.g. carry your keys with you at different times not just when you are leaving
 - Access to the house – if you can let the dog inside the house, provide it with a single room that may smell like you (for comfort in order to relax the dog (the 'denning' principle)
 - Obedience training – a dog can be trained to be alone, and bark only on command
 - Avoid stimulus – distract your dog with another form of reward at the time it normally barks at a neighbourhood disturbance (e.g. the postman)
 - Fence design – design a fence to restrict your dog's vision of outside stimuli if your dog can see outside
 - Anti-barking devices can reduce barking
 - Discipline - Dogs are pack animals and need to be shown where they stand in relation to the family unit

missing members of its pack. When dogs are left alone they may fret and become anxious, often barking for extended periods of time. Dogs may also become fearful or anxious of people or objects, like the postman or the neighbour's lawnmower.

Separation anxiety is a behavioural problem that occurs in dogs that become highly attached to their owner, another dog or other family member, and become extremely distressed in their absence. This condition can arise if your dog is left alone for long periods of time, coupled with boredom. Subsequently, this may lead to excessive nuisance barking.

3. THREAT TO THEIR TERRITORY

Dogs bark to alert their owners of trouble, such as an intruder entering the property or people walking past your

property. A dog's idea of an intruder may differ to that of the owner. It could include cats, possums, other dogs or even birds flying across the property.

Whilst it is acceptable for a dog to bark to warn its owner of an intruder, it is the owner's responsibility to train the dog not to bark at normal occurrences, such as animals and noise.

4. DISCOMFORT

Pain and discomfort, illness or even being restricted to a small area may be a cause of barking. Dogs left chained or tied up may find it difficult to get exercise or water to drink.

5. EXCITEMENT & ATTENTION SEEKING

Anticipating a walk, playing games, playing with children, seeing people in swimming pools, and hearing their owners arriving home, often excite a dog.