

Barking Dogs

Environmental Health

**Public Protection
Partnership**

Bracknell Forest
West Berkshire



Dog barking

Dogs like to bark. In most cases it does not cause a problem but sometimes persistent dog barking could be causing a statutory noise nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Barking and / or howling can be disturbing for a dog owner's neighbours, especially at night or if it comes into conflict with other people's routines, e.g. night workers who need to sleep during the day. Frequently the problem arises when the dog's owners are out and are unaware that their pet is causing a nuisance. Sometimes people ask for the noise to be stopped because they believe that the dog may be in distress.

This leaflet explains some of the reasons why dogs bark. It suggests some things you can do to try and stop your dog barking.

Why do dogs bark?

A dog will bark for many reasons. It could be excited, bored, attention seeking, scared, lonely, frustrated, or guarding you and your home.

If your dog is **excited** it will probably bark and jump around at visitors, at dinner time or at the sight of his lead.

- ✓ DO try to give your dog more exercise. Tired dogs don't have the energy to get over-excited.
- ✓ DO look for local obedience training courses and get it used to obeying commands. Whilst doing other commands it should become quieter.
- ✗ DON'T shout at the dog - it may think you are excited too and bark even more!

If your dog is **bored** it may not bark all the time, only when it has nothing to do. Bored dogs will bark or be destructive whether you are there or not.

- ✓ DO, once again, give your dog lots of exercise.
- ✓ DO keep it occupied, either with toys or a large marrowbone.
- ✗ DON'T leave it alone for long periods of time.

If your dog is **attention seeking** it will seem to bark for no reason and stop when it gets your attention.

- ✓ DO try to break it of this habit by ignoring your dog when it's obviously seeking attention (but things may get worse before they get better!).
- ✓ DO give it attention when it's being quiet and good and for at least one hour a day.
- ✗ DON'T give in!

If your dog is **lonely** it will probably bark as soon as you leave it and may become destructive as well.

- ✓ DO get your dog used to being on his own. Find a room that it likes, start with a few minutes at a time and gradually build up the time.
- ✓ DO leave the radio on, turn off the lights and close the curtains. Seeing people outside in the street can make your dog bark.
- ✓ DO try placing an unwashed item of clothing on the other side of the door to make the dog think you are still at home.
- ✓ DO exercise and feed your dog before going out to encourage it to sleep and relax.
- ✗ DON'T leave it on its own for long periods of time. Get a friend to walk it during the day if you are out at work.

If your dog is **frustrated** it will bark because it can't get at something it can see or hear - a cat, another dog barking, something out in the street.

- ✓ DO try to find out what is making it frustrated.
- ✓ DO leave the radio on to drown out noises or pull the curtains to stop it seeing out.
- ✓ DO get it used to sounds that make it bark. Try recording some on to a cassette and playing it back to your dog.
- ✓ DO make sure it has a toy or something else it can take its frustration out on.
- ✓ DO get male dogs neutered so they are not excited by bitches in season (they can smell one up to six miles away!).
- ✗ DON'T leave your dog alone in the garden. Too many distractions will make it bark.

If your dog is **guarding you and your home** it will be barking to protect or alert you. However, it should stop barking as soon as the threat has gone.

- ✓ DO teach your dog to calm down when you open the door.
- ✓ DO encourage it to sit and be quiet if you wish to let visitors in.
- ✓ DO put a pot of dog treats by the door for visitors to give it.
- ✗ DON'T let your visitors feed him treats unless he deserves them - they could be rewarding him for bad behaviour!



Dog toys

Kong dog toys are widely used and recommended for therapy and prevention of boredom, anxiety and other behavioural problems. These toys can be stuffed with different foods for the dog to lick and taste while you are out. These toys come in several sizes. Don't get one so small your dog could swallow it, or so large that he could get his nose stuck inside it. You must consider the size of the dog's jaws.

A Kong should never be fast food. The point is to keep your dog interested for as long as possible. Recipes for tasty stuffings could include cheese, chicken, dog biscuits, liver, dog choc drops, meat scraps or fruit - though probably not all at the same time!

Training your dog

Remember, training is important so that your dog does not bark at just anything that moves. A well-trained dog should be able to tell the difference between people allowed into the house and people who are intruders. Good training combined with affection and companionship should mean that your dog will not develop bad habits. Start young and start as you mean to go on.

If you need more help to stop your dog's problem barking, please contact your veterinary surgeon or your local Animal Warden.

We are committed to being accessible to everyone. If you require this document in an alternative format or translation, please call Environmental Health and Licensing on Telephone 01635 551111.

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