

Fact sheet: barking dogs

For dog owners

This factsheet is to assist dog owners that may have an excessive barking dog. Recently you may have received a complaint from your neighbour about the noise nuisance. Please read this factsheet to learn about the causes and possible solutions to resolve the excessive barking.

What causes dogs to bark excessively?

- **Boredom** - Dogs that are left alone all day with nothing to do may bark out of boredom
- **Separation anxiety** - Dogs are pack animals and it's normal for them to become anxious when left alone
- **Fear** - Dogs can also bark due to fear. They may be afraid of people coming near their territory or fearful of noises, particularly at night which may cause anxieties. For example dogs can be fearful of fireworks, thunderstorms and lawnmowers
- **Territorial behavior** - It is natural for dogs to want to warn their owner about potential intruders. The dog may not be able to distinguish between welcomed visitors and intruders
- **Communication** - Dogs can bark as a means of communication. They may bark when calling out to other dogs or when responding to other barking dogs, or when communicating with its human pack members. Any noise, no matter how slight can cause a barking response. For example rustling leaves, a banging window or a knock at the front door.

Tips for excessive barking

Dogs bark excessively for numerous reasons, therefore solutions to the problem differs from one dog to the next. The following are some simple tips to help:

- **Exercise** - Make sure your dog gets enough exercise. An active dog barks less
- **Company** - Make sure you spend enough time with your dog, or your dog has time with other dogs for a bit of playtime. Social time is just as important for your dog as it is for you
- **Stimulation** - Supply your dog with food, water and toys to keep them happy. A bored dog barks to attract attention. Remember a more active dog barks less
- **Fence design** - Design your home so that it restricts your dog's vision to outside disturbances like pedestrians or cars.

If the dog's barking continues to disrupt daily activities and cause noise nuisance in the neighbourhood, Burke Shire Council is authorised under the Local Law to get involved and assist in resolving the issue.

Once Council receives a complaint, you may be asked to take action to resolve the problem. Neighbours may be more patient with your dog's barking, if they are aware of the steps you are taking to minimise the barking.

If necessary, manage the problem with help from a behavioural specialist. It's a good idea to take your dog to the vet for a full health check to make sure there are no medical reasons for his excessive barking. Vet behaviourists can help to determine the underlying cause of the barking and develop a tailor-made treatment plan for your dog.

Barking dog control methods

The treatment of nuisance behaviours such as excessive barking should begin by attempting to address the cause of the problem. If these methods fail then you may wish to try a range of electronically-activated devices that are on the market such as citronella collars, electronic bark collars and stationary deterrents to deal with excessive barking. Council recommends consultation with your vet before using these devices.