

CONSTANT BARKING CAN BE AVOIDED

HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL TIPS

Barking comes naturally to dogs, but the constant barking or whining of a dog can be disturbing or annoying for the neighbours. Often the problem occurs when the dog's owner is out of the house and so the owner doesn't know until someone complains.

In law, a barking dog can be a noise nuisance. The owner can be taken to court if he does nothing to stop the nuisance. This leaflet suggests some simple things you, as a dog owner can try.

Why dogs bark

Dogs are not by nature solitary animals. They need the security of a family group. Pet dogs regard their owners as a substitute family and can soon become distressed when left alone.

There are many reasons why your dog may bark:

- loneliness
- boredom or frustration
- attention seeking
- defending his territory
- medical problems

The importance of training

Training is important so that your dog does not bark at just anything that moves. A well-trained dog should be able to tell 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.

Some simple things to try

Some dogs just don't want you to go out. Get your dog used to the idea that you are away for different periods of time at different times of the day. That way he might not be so concerned each time you leave. And don't make a fuss of your dog when you leave him. Try putting your dog on his own in another room - at first for a few minutes, then gradually build up the time you leave your dog alone. Do not return to your dog until he is quiet for a period. When you return, praise him.

Some dogs will bark because they want to join in what's going on outside. If this is the problem, try leaving your dog so that he cannot see outside.

Some dogs will settle only if they can hear a human voice. Leaving a radio on at low volume might help. But make sure the radio is not too loud. You don't want to have complaints about that!

Try not to leave your dog for long periods. If you have to, see if there is someone who can look in during that time. Maybe that person could take your dog for a walk or let him out into the garden, if you have one.

If you have to leave your dog for long periods:

- feed and exercise him before you go out and leave him some fresh water.
- make sure his bed or basket is comfortable and leave him his favourite toys.
- check that the room is not hot or too cold and that there is adequate ventilation.

and if you aren't coming back until after dark, leave a light on.

Some other points

If you do keep your dog outside, think carefully about where you put his kennel and where he can run. Try not to put it near your neighbour's fence or where your dog will be tempted to bark.

Don't blame the dog and think that you will solve everything by replacing him with another. It probably will not, unless you change your lifestyle at the same time.

Getting a second dog for company might help. But think about this carefully. Do you have the space and can you afford a second dog? Another dog could result in more not less problems.

But nothing I do works

Old dogs can be taught new tricks. Ask your local Council's dog warden to suggest other things.

You should also go to your vet. Sometimes a dog will bark because he is ill - anxiety is often the cause of barking. You can ask your vet to refer your dog to an animal behaviourist who is an expert and can suggest ways to improve your dog's behaviour.

Further information

There are many publications on animal training and behaviour (The Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC) can provide a list of current publications. APBC are at 257 Royal College Street, London NS1.

And remember

Be a responsible dog owner at all times. Make sure your dog is well cared for and well trained. In particular, train your dog not to foul in public places - if he does, "scoop the poop". And do make sure he has a collar and identification tag - it's the law when he's in public places.