



# EXCESSIVE BARKING

Excessive barking can be a real problem, especially when it comes to neighbours and councils. A dog that barks excessively does so for any number of reasons and can be quite annoying and distressing to its owners. The majority of dogs surrendered to local pounds are there due to their problem barking.

To effectively cure a dog's excessive barking, we must first try to identify the cause:

Why does your dog bark?

- Is it that he wants to go outside?
- Come inside?
- Is he hungry/demanding attention?
- There's someone at the front door?
- Does he stop when told or a after a few woofs? If so then you really don't have a problem, he is just being a dog.

On the other hand, if he barks continuously until his throat is raw, even when tied up, locked out or hosed down for his efforts, then you definitely have a legitimate complaint (and probably your neighbours also).

## Prevention is better than cure.

Proper socialisation to build confidence within. With proper socialisation training, the dog will decrease a lot of his anti-social behaviour. If simple boredom is the problem, then look to decreasing that with training to redirect the dog's energies. If the dog is taught from a young age what acceptable behaviour is within its pack, then you will rarely have problems later on.

## Tips

### First method..

As strange as it may seem, the first step in curing the noisy dog is to teach it to speak on command, thus controlling the impulse and also teaching it to be quiet. An excited dog is more prone to give voice, so use something that sparks his interest. A bit of food, a ball, a squeaky toy. Try holding it just out of reach and repeating the command "Speak". Allow the dog one or two woofs then reward him. Once this response becomes automatic to the command you will then teach "Quiet". When the dog is speaking on command, praise him. Then give the command "Quiet". When the dog pauses between barks, reward him. Continue only giving the reward (food/ball) for "Quiet" now. Add verbal praise when the dog is commanded to speak.

To redirect and control the barking is the key, you cannot and should not expect to totally eradicate barking altogether. When he runs to the knock at the door and barks, praise him, and then tell him to be "Quiet". When he responds, PRAISE him.

You now have a watch dog! NOT a nuisance.

**A couple of other tricks to try..**

- If he is outside in the backyard, try banging loudly on the window to “surprise” him whilst in mid-bark. Keep doing this each time he barks. It may take a few goes, but he should eventually get the message.
- You could also try the water gun method. However this only works if you can get close up to the dog whilst in mid-bark. If you have a “super soaker” then you can quietly aim from a window. But you must squirt the dog whilst he is barking, **not** after he has paused as he won’t associate the squirting with the barking.
- If he is barking at the back door to come in, simply ignore him! When I say ignore, I mean, absolutely no eye contact, no reaction – NO NOTHING! When he finally stops (for at least 5 mins) then open the door and let him in, but not before he is made to sit first.

### **When things get tougher...**

If your dog is barking at a cat or bird etc, then this will prove more difficult as the stimulant (the bird/cat) is beyond your control. In many cases the bored dog is actually enjoying his game of “chase the birdie” in which case it becomes self-rewarding, especially if you are not at home. If your dog is barking at birds or cats, then the only way to try to ease the behaviour is to keep him in a place where he cannot see them ie. indoors or in a different section of the yard.

The act of chasing is a strong instinct within a dog as it stems from their “prey” drives which is used to hunt and kill for food. Even though our domestic dogs no longer have to hunt for their food, this instinct is “pre-wired” from their ancestors with some breeds (and some individual dogs) having a higher prey drive than others. In this case, high level fetch games and obedience training can help.

At the end of it all, dogs are dogs- and dogs will bark. A couple of barks do not mean your dog is a “nuisance” barker, however barking all night long is.

It may be worthwhile checking out what your dog may be barking at....you may be surprised at what you find!