

## Information Sheet

# Nuisance Barking Dogs

### Why do Dogs Bark?

Barking is a natural behaviour for dogs; it is one way they communicate. All dogs bark but some barking dogs become a nuisance. Excessive barking is often a sign that something is “wrong” and can become a disruptive neighbourhood issue.

It is important to try to find out why your dog is barking. Reasons for barking include:

- It may be bored, lonely or frustrated due to a lack of company, exercise, or mental stimulation. If left in the backyard for long periods, barking may be an enjoyable way for dogs to pass the time. Dogs are also social pack animals and may suffer from anxiety when alone.
- Even though their barking may result in scolding, dogs may still prefer negative attention to no attention at all.
- To alert or warn you of something it thinks might be a threat. This could include barking at animals, postal workers, noises, or the movement of people or vehicles outside the property.
- Some dog breeds may be more inclined to bark. Breeds such as cattle dogs, kelpies, border collies and German shepherds were originally bred to work on farms and may have problems adjusting to a suburban backyard.
- Due to fear (e.g. of thunder, fireworks, or other loud noises).
- Due to medical reasons (e.g. fleas, allergy, or illness).
- Due to physical reasons (e.g. if hot, cold, hungry or thirsty).

### What can I do about the problem?

The treatment of behaviours such as excessive barking should begin by determining the root cause of the problem and then attempting to address the underlying cause. Depending on why your dog is barking, you may need to:

- Take your dog on more frequent walks (once or twice daily) and include it on family outings. Even if you have a large yard, dogs still need to socialise and experience the sounds and smells of walks outside.
- Find a designated off-leash area to give your dog a free run. See the City of Albany website for local dog exercise areas at [www.albany.wa.gov.au](http://www.albany.wa.gov.au).
- Make the backyard environment more interesting.
- Provide the dog with toys and a large raw marrow bone to chew. You can also stuff hollow (indestructible) toys with food. Ensure the dog has fresh water, a balanced diet, and adequate shelter. If possible, give the dog access to the house through a dog door.
- Take your dog to obedience classes. Practice what you learn regularly to provide mental stimulation for the dog.
- If the dog is barking at passers-by, block its view of movement outside the property with solid fencing, shade cloth or hedging. If the source of provocation is a human (e.g. children teasing the dog), try to discuss the problem with them.
- Make sure your dog is in good health, by taking it to the vet for regular checkups.
- Undertake dog training – the approach taken will depend on the reason for barking.

## **Teaching your dog “Quiet”**

Just like you can teach your dog the commands sit and stay, you can teach the dog to understand that “quiet” to mean stop barking. Rather than just saying “no”, saying “quiet” gives the dog a definite action to perform.

Start the training session with plenty of tasty treats at the ready. With the dog paying attention say “quiet” even though the dog is not barking. You may want to raise your finger to your lips to give the dog a physical cue as well. Don’t shout, but say the word as quietly as possible. Give the dog a treat (unless it barks when you say “quiet”).

Repeat this exercise as often as you like but stop the training session before the dog becomes bored. Carry treats around regularly for a while because the next step is to try it when the dog is barking.

After 1 or 2 barks, ask the dog for “quiet”. When you do this, make sure you are close to the dog and have a treat ready. If the dog looks at you and is quiet, praise the dog profusely and give a treat. If it ignores you and carries on barking, let the dog know you have a treat by putting it under its nose. When the dog stops barking, reward and treat.

After a little while you can start to sometimes reward with just the voice and gradually use the treats less and less. It is a good idea to every now and then reward with treats for responding to “quiet” even after the dog has learned the cue.

If you need help with dog training, ask your local vet for advice. They may be able to suggest an obedience club, a dog trainer or an animal behaviour specialist, or look under 'Dog Training' in the yellow pages.

### **What can I do if I live near a dog that barks excessively?**

Dog owners are often not aware of their dog’s excessive barking so we suggest you contact the owner and explain the problem to them. It may help to provide them with times the dog is barking.

If your neighbours are unapproachable or do not agree there is a problem, contact the City of Albany Rangers on 6820 3999 or via email at [ranger@albany.wa.gov.au](mailto:ranger@albany.wa.gov.au) .

### **What will Rangers do if I make a complaint?**

Local governments are responsible for enforcing the nuisance provisions of the Dog Act 1976. In the first instance, Rangers need to be satisfied that a nuisance is being created.

Actions may include a Ranger talking to neighbours and observing barking behaviour and you may be asked to keep a record of the barking.

### **What if the barking continues?**

If the Ranger is satisfied that the barking is causing a nuisance, he or she may issue a noise abatement order which requires the owner to prevent the dog making the noise. This notice has effect for six months.

If the owner does not comply with the notice, they may be issued an infringement notice of \$200 or be taken to court, where a penalty of up to \$5,000 may be issued. Higher penalties apply if the dog is a dangerous dog.

### **What if I make a false complaint?**

Making a false report (for whatever reason) may result in civil court action being taken against you for a false declaration.

### **Where can I get more information?**

For more information visit the Department of Local Government and Communities website at: <https://www.dlhc.wa.gov.au/AdviceSupport/Pages/Cats-and-dogs.aspx> .