

# Barking dogs

A guide for dog owners.

## Barking dogs and your neighbourhood

Dogs are a part of our community and for many people, they are a source of companionship and enjoyment.

And while barking is a natural behaviour for dogs, persistent excessive barking, whining or howling can be a nuisance and may impact your neighbours.

This guide has been developed to help you work through any barking behaviours that you may be experiencing. Excessive barking can be resolved once the cause has been identified.

Getting your dog to bark less will take time, work, practice, and consistency. It won't happen overnight, but with proper techniques and time, barking can be addressed.

## Contents

Why dogs bark	2
<hr/>	
Barking behaviours	
• Territorial or alert barking	3
• Separation distress or anxiety	4
• Old age or health issues	4
• Bored or attention seeking	5
• Sensitive to sound	5
<hr/>	
What's next	6
<hr/>	
What happens if a report is made about your dog	7
<hr/>	
Alternative solutions	9
<hr/>	
Dear neighbour postcard	9

# Why dogs bark

Whilst barking is a natural behavior, it may be an issue if it occurs:

- too frequently
- at inappropriate times of the day or night
- for extended periods of time.

To assist in identifying why your dog is barking, firstly consider what your dog is doing when the barking occurs.

## Normal barking

Normal barking can occur in the following situations:

- play
- herding
- hunting
- frustration
- lack of stimulation and enrichment
- learnt behaviour
- attention seeking
- lack of training or inappropriate training.

## Excessive barking

Excessive (or emotional disorder) barking may indicate underlying behavioural or environmental issues that are concerning such as:

- abnormal or irrational
- disruptive to the household
- territorial or alert barking
- separation distress
- fear or phobias
- compulsive
- dementia or pain.

If you think your dog is experiencing any of these behaviours consult your vet immediately.

## Identify why a dog is barking

A dog's persistent barking is a learnt behaviour and a result of an issue; therefore, it is very important to find out why your dog barks.

On the following pages we describe five different types of barking behaviour and provide ideas to try to resolve the barking.

Look through the triggers and signs of each behaviour type to identify and hopefully resolve your dog's excessive barking behaviour.

## Seek help

If you are unable to resolve your dog's barking behaviour, we suggest you contact your local vet or dog behaviourist.

If you would like to discuss the issue with a community ranger contact us on 8384 0666 or email [mail@onkaparinga.sa.gov.au](mailto:mail@onkaparinga.sa.gov.au)

## Is your dog's barking affecting your neighbours

If you are concerned about the level of noise your dog is making, we suggest speaking with your neighbour(s) who may be affected.

If you don't feel comfortable approaching your neighbour(s) in person, you can use one of our dear neighbour postcards available in this guide.

## If a report is made about your dog's barking

On the following pages we've outlined the steps that are taken if we receive a complaint about your dog's barking.

# Barking behaviours

## Territorial or alert barking

### BARKING TRIGGERS

- Movement outside the property i.e. vehicles, people/school children passing, other dogs passing, bus stop, road works, sports events etc.
- Neighbours moving around their property – e.g. gardening, socialising, playing etc.
- Other animals in the vicinity – e.g. cats, possums, rats, birds etc.
- Unfamiliar visitors approaching the home.
- Unfamiliar sounds or smells.
- Other dogs barking.

### ACTIONS TO TRY TO RESOLVE THE BARKING

- Increase physical, mental and social enrichment
- Block the view of your street or give your dog a view of your street.
- Give your dog access to the family home – e.g. install a doggy door.
- Bring your dog inside at times when triggers are likely to occur.
- Contain your dog in a different area of your property.
- Interactive play with your dog at home when you return.
- Call your dog to come to you and give them a treat – this reinforces to the dog that their job is done.
- Feed your dog from slow release food dispensing toys (treat balls), morning and night.
- Provide problem solving activities such as hunting for food and scent games.
- Invest in snuffle mats, clam shells filled with water and sand for digging or make your own doggy toys – there are some great ideas and examples online.
- Create a sensory garden – different surfaces, heights and objects to encourage exploration and interaction.
- Rotate the selection of available toys.
- Join a dog training school or visit the RSPCA for a list of force-free trainers.
- Book your dog in for doggy day care or engage a qualified dog walker.

## Separation distress or anxiety

### BARKING TRIGGERS

- Being left alone while you are out.
- Loss of a companion – human or animal.

### SIGNS TO LOOK FOR

- Unable to settle.
- Refusing to go outside.
- Looking sad, depressed or nervous (displaying a fearful nature).
- Inappropriate toilet behaviours.
- Attempting to escape.
- Excessive pacing, salivation.
- Compulsive behaviours such as tail chasing, shadow chasing excessive licking of flanks or paws.
- Following/shadowing you or a family member around.
- Not eating or drinking when home alone, or only eating when owner arrives home.
- Destructive behaviour.

### IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TO TRY TO RESOLVE THE BARKING

- Visit a vet for diagnosis and treatment including a suggested modification plan
- Administer medication as prescribed or recommended by a vet.

### OTHER ACTIONS TO TRY TO RESOLVE THE BARKING

- Reduce anxiety by administering prescribed medications.

## Old age or health issues

### BARKING TRIGGERS

- Age-related medical conditions or injuries, such as dementia, arthritis, anxiety, incontinence, vision loss or hearing loss, pain related.
- Age related stress, confusion, frustration or fear.
- Loss of a companion – human or animal.
- No safe or familiar place your dog feels it can retreat to.

### IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TO TRY TO PREVENT THE BARKING

- Visit a vet for diagnosis and treatment, including a suggested modification plan
- Administer medication as prescribed or recommended by a vet.

### ADDITIONAL ACTIONS TO TRIAL

- Provide a safe and quiet place for your dog to go, such as a crate that is equipped with your dog's favourite things.
- Give your dog access to the family home – e.g. install a doggy door.
- Block the view of your street or give your dog a view of your street.

## Bored or seeking attention

### BARKING TRIGGERS

Lack of physical, mental and social enrichment, such as:

- lack of attention
- lack of room to move around
- lack of exercise
- being chained or tied up.

### SIGNS TO LOOK FOR

- Digging holes
- Trying to escape
- Destructive chewing
- Jumping on the boundary fence
- Intense and excessive on-patrol barking
- Overly energetic

### ACTIONS TO TRY TO RESOLVE THE BARKING

Increase physical, mental and social enrichment:

- Give your dog a view of the street
- Block the view of your street.

- Regular exercise away from home.
- Make more time to play with your dog at home.
- Feed your dog from slow release food dispensing toys (treat balls), morning and night
- Problem solving activities, such as hunting for food and scent games.
- Invest in snuffle mats, clam shells filled with water and sand for digging or make your own doggy toys (search online for great ideas and examples).
- Create a sensory garden – different surfaces, heights and objects to encourage exploration and interaction.
- Rotate the selection of available toys.
- Give your dog access to the family home – e.g. install a doggy door.
- Join a dog training school or visit the RSPCA for a list of force-free trainers.
- Socialise your dog with a known, friendly dog.
- Dog day care or engage a qualified dog walker.
- Ask family and friends to dog sit.
- Include your dog in family outings.

---

## Sensitive to sound

### BARKING TRIGGERS

- Exposure to external sounds
  - e.g. fireworks, thunder, sirens or loud noises.

### ACTIONS TO TRY TO RESOLVE THE BARKING

- If the triggers are (e.g a jack hammer next door), temporarily remove your dog from the location/property.

- Provide a safe and quiet place for your dog to hide.
- Reduce anxiety by administering over the counter medications.
- Administer medication prescribed by your vet.
- Be aware and prepared of upcoming fireworks or thunderstorm activity.
- If you are at home whilst a trigger noise is occurring, massage, touch or hug your dog to provide security and reassurance.

# What's next

If you're still unsure what is causing the barking behaviour, try filming your dog when you are not at home.

## Monitoring the dog's progress

Once you have identified your dog's barking triggers monitor their progress by:

- Keeping a diary of your dog's behaviour.
- Seeking feedback from neighbours through weekly check-ins. Sometimes neighbours have a good idea of how your dog is behaving, especially if the barking occurs while you are away from home.

## Medication

When trialling medication please note that you may need to allow up to six weeks before behaviour change occurs.

This information may need to be relayed to your neighbours/council, if you are working with your neighbours and or council to resolve a barking issue.

## Positive reinforcement

Always remember to reward your dog with treats, praise or play for quiet behaviour.

Rewarding their good behaviour reinforces the training and importance of what they've learnt.

## If your dog's barking improves, continue to:

- monitor your dog's progress
- provide consistency to your dog's daily life – stick to your agreed plan of approach to manage the barking
- Reward your dog with treats, praise or play for quiet behaviour
- keep a diary of your dog's behaviour.

## If there is no improvement

- Seek professional advice from your vet or a certified dog behavioural trainer.
- Visit the RSPCA for a list of force-free trainers.

# What happens if a report is made about your dog

## 1 A report has been made

While barking is a natural communication behaviour for dogs, your neighbours may feel it's excessive and may contact us to report it.

## 2 Council gathers information

On receipt of a report about a dog that is causing a barking nuisance we gather information to understand the dog's behaviour, why the dog is barking, how often, when and for how long.

This may involve:

- meeting the customer and assessing the situation from their property
- recording the dog barking
- speaking with or visiting other neighbours to gather additional information.

**Estimated time:** about 7 days.

## 3 You will be notified

We will notify you of the report and provide suggestions to resolve your dog's barking based on the most likely cause.

You will be provided with resources to support behaviour change or confirm the cause and extent of the barking.

## 4 Monitor behaviour change

We will seek weekly feedback from your neighbour(s) and share this with you. For example:

- Has the barking reduced, increased or stayed the same?
- What changes are you implementing that are and are not working?

**Estimated time:** 3–5 weeks

*The monitoring stage may be extended to allow for continuous improvement of the dog's behaviour to be recognised.*

## 5 If there is no improvement

If you are unable or unwilling to address your dog's nuisance behaviour and there is evidence of persistent nuisance, we may serve you with a Control (Barking Dog) Order.

A control order requires you to take all reasonable steps to prevent nuisance barking including engaging a behaviourist and/or undertaking a training course.

If we proceed to a control order, supporting evidence will have been gathered to prove persistent unreasonable barking and its impact on neighbours. See [page 8](#) for more information.

Prior notice will be given before a control order is served and any information you provide will be considered.

**Estimated time:** 2–4 weeks

## 6 If a control order is served

You are required to take all reasonable steps to prevent your dog repeating the behaviour.

You may be directed to engage a dog behaviourist and complete training with your dog.

**Estimated time:** Completing training may take 1–2 months.

## 7 If barking continues after a control order is in place

Further evidence will be gathered of the breach, including how often, how long and what impact it's having on neighbours.

Failure to meet the requirements of the control order may result in the following:

- an expiation notice may be issued
- prosecution may be initiated through the Magistrates Court which can lead to strict controls being imposed on the dog.

**Estimated time:** Briefing a matter before the court for prosecution or court ordered directions may take 12–18 months.

## 8 Resolution

The issue is resolved once persistent barking has been addressed and the barking no longer persistently interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of a person.

Once the barking issue is resolved, a letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the dog owner and neighbours, and the report will be closed.

If nuisance barking recommences we may re-open the report, starting at the relevant stage.

## What is a control order?

- A control order is a legally-enforceable way in which a council can place restrictions and/or requirements on the owner of a dog.
- A control order requires the dog owner to take all reasonable steps to reduce the nuisance barking. This may include undertaking specific training courses or to seek professional assistance.
- A control order can be issued by local councils or a representative of the Dog and Cat Management board.

## Documented evidence

If we proceed to issuing a Control (Barking Dog) Order, supporting evidence will be required to prove persistent unreasonable barking and its impact on neighbours.

This evidence can be in the form of:

- a diary with date, time and duration of barking recorded
- audio or video recordings
- an impact statement; or
- a combination of all of the above.



# Alternative solutions

## Legal action

The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 provides the legislative framework from which civil action can be taken against a dog owner. Any person can take civil action; however this course of action can only be initiated by the complainant.

The City of Onkaparinga cannot take civil action against a dog owner, on your behalf.

For more information contact the Dog and Cat Management Board on 8124 4962 or visit [www.dogandcatboard.com.au](http://www.dogandcatboard.com.au)


## Mediation

Mediation can help to resolve conflict and disputes at an early stage, with a view to avoiding the expense and stress of drawn-out legal proceedings. Contact Uniting Communities Mediation Service on 8342 1800 or visit [www.unitingcommunities.org/mediation](http://www.unitingcommunities.org/mediation)

## Dear neighbour postcard

Print this postcard, fill it in and pop it into your neighbour's letterbox.

If you'd like a hard copy of the postcard please phone 8384 0666.



Dear neighbour

I believe my dog(s) may be disturbing some neighbours.

If so, I'm trying to understand what is causing these behaviours to help me manage them. I would like your support by answering the below questions.

Is my dog's excessive barking causing you concern?  Yes  No

What noises do you hear my dog making?  barking  howling  crying/whining  growling

This mainly occurs:  nights  weekdays  weekends  when you're not home

Any other comments:

Please return this card to:

Name

Address

If you would like to provide any further feedback, please phone me on: