

## My neighbour's dog is barking excessively – what can I do?

All dogs bark, but some barking dogs become a real neighbourhood nuisance, greatly reducing the quality of life for their neighbours and increasing neighbourhood tensions. Barking dogs are the most common animal behaviour problem Council is asked to deal with.

### Why dogs bark

- Dogs are social animals and often bark when they are lonely
- Separation from an owner can cause dogs stress
- Barking may also be the result of boredom, frustration, or a dog's way of seeking attention from its owner
- Dogs bark out of fear - this can be fear of people, objects, or other animals
- Dogs bark when there is a threat to their territory
- Playing with your dog often stimulates barking
- Some breeds have a reputation for barking
- Some dominant dogs bark until they get what they want.

### What can I do to if my neighbour's dog is barking excessively?

Council feels the most effective and successful way of managing a nuisance barking dog is for the person affected by the problem (the complainant) to communicate their concerns directly with the dog owner.

There is a chance the dog owner may not even be aware their dog is excessively barking and causing a problem for neighbours. Many dogs will bark when their owners are not at home, and this may be due to separation anxiety.

You should carefully consider all issues and possibilities before deciding on an appropriate course of action. Once you have decided the barking is excessive and disturbing your way of life, please consider the following options to manage the situation.

Approach the dog's owner as soon as the problem arises, and state your case clearly and politely. They may not be aware of the issue. If the dog's owner is unapproachable, or you are not comfortable approaching the dog owner, the notification letter and the fact sheet 'Reasons why your dog may be barking excessively' which have been included in the pack, should be placed in the dog owner's letter box or mailed.

Council asks that you wait 14 days for the barking to be addressed. If the barking continues to be a problem after this period of time contact Council to lodge an official complaint.

This information is available in the ['Managing barking in our community information pack'](#) or [Barking dog nuisance information pack'](#)

## How to lodge a complaint

Council will need the correct address of where the dog is kept, a description of the dog, a detailed list of dates, times and possible causes for the dogs barking and how the barking is affecting you. This information will assist us to carry out a fair and impartial investigation and may also help the dogs' owner understand and resolve any problems that may be contributing to excessive barking.

Without this information Council is unable to accept the complaint.

## What happens to my complaint?

In the first instance that a complaint is received Council will provide you with the 'Barking dog nuisance information pack' by post or email or you may wish to download this from Council's website.

If you have tried to resolve the problem with your neighbor and/or the excessive barking problem does not abate, Council needs to be advised so we can investigate the matter further.

As Councils' investigation forms part of a legal process it is necessary to obtain sufficient information/evidence to confirm the existence of a nuisance. It is also necessary that Council satisfies the requirements of relevant legislation and provides reasonable time and notice to the owner of the offending dog.

In the event that legal action is taken, all parties including the complainant and other witnesses may be asked to provide statements and attend court to provide evidence if required.

Without your willingness to assist Council with this requirement, Council is unable to accept the complaint.

## What will Council do if the barking continues to cause nuisance?

Should Council receive a further complaint from yourself regarding the nuisance barking dog; a Council officer will contact you to obtain a version of events or statement and gather any evidence that the you may have to support the complaint.

Council will contact the dog's owner and let them know that a complaint has been received. We will also provide the owner with information on why dogs bark excessively and suggest ways in which this can be resolved.

If Council is satisfied that a nuisance exists and that there is no reasonable or lawful excuse for the dog/s barking and Council finds that the animal owner has failed to comply with the notice; Council may issue a further fine, commence legal or other action to resolve the matter which may include the seizing of the dog/s.

Without your willingness assist Council with this requirement, Council is unable to investigate the complaint or commence enforcement action.

**Dear Neighbour,**

**You may not be aware, but your dog is currently causing a noise nuisance in the neighbourhood by barking excessively.**

**I am contacting you as a first step, to express my concern and allow you the opportunity to rectify the situation without recording an official complaint against your dog/s with council.**

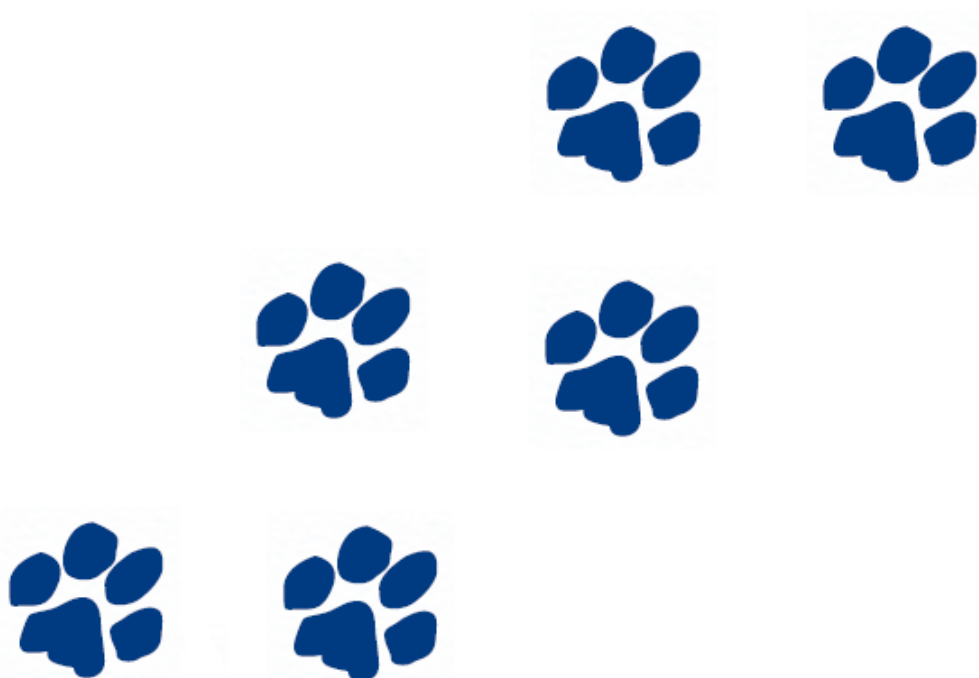
**Attached is a fact sheet to help you identify why your dog barks excessively and possible solutions for the excessive barking.**

**For more detailed information and tips on how to stop excessive barking you can visit the Moreton Bay Regional Council website [www.moretonbay.qld.gov.au](http://www.moretonbay.qld.gov.au)**

**All that is needed at this stage is your co-operation to stop the excessive barking and avoid this matter progressing any further.**

**Regards**

**Your Neighbour**



## Reasons why your dog may be barking excessively

All dogs bark, but some barking dogs become a real neighbourhood nuisance – greatly reducing the quality of life for their neighbours and increasing neighbourhood tensions.

**BOREDOM** – Being alone with very little to do for extended periods of time can lead to boredom, frustration and loneliness for dogs. Bored dogs also show other anti-social behaviours, like trying to escape, being destructive, and chewing and digging. To avoid boredom you need to give your dog plenty to do when it's alone.

- Try interactive toys that hide food or ones that are designed to require manipulation and work to obtain the food reward. Leave toys, rope chews, rawhides and even bones for a dog to play with and use up time while alone.
- Give your dog a bone or dog treat (e.g. a pig ear or chew toy) when you leave the house. This will teach your dog that when you leave there is a positive reward – the bone or treat.
- Leaving an article of clothing with the scent of the missed loved one on it also works well, especially for puppies.
- Use old drink bottles or milk containers (ensure to remove the lid) – cut a few squares in the side and place dry biscuits or ice inside. Your dog will roll them like a toy. They also make good chew toys (when empty).
- A variety of toys (balls, chew toys etc.) can be left in the yard for your dog to play with. Be mindful to alternate your dog's toys as they are just like kids - they will get bored with the same toys and ignore them.

**EXCITEMENT** – Anticipating a walk, playing games, playing with children, seeing people in swimming pools, and hearing their owners arriving home, often excite a dog. This uncontrolled barking is fairly easy to fix by removing the source of excitement from the dog and not rewarding the barking behaviour.

- Increase physical exercise
- Regularly walk your dog and change the route you walk.
- Remove direct line of sight between the dog and children or animals, as looking at other animals or children may provoke barking
- Spend FUN time with your dog

**ANXIETY** – Dogs are 'pack' animals and dogs regard its owners and family as its pack, and will bark in an attempt to communicate with the missing members of its pack. When dogs are left alone they may fret and become anxious, often barking for extended periods of time. Dogs may also become fearful or anxious of people or objects, like the postman or the neighbour's lawnmower. When dogs bark because of fear or anxiety, it is very important to work on reducing anxiety levels as early as possible. This will benefit your dog and the community.

- Avoid routine e.g. carry your keys with you at different times not just the times you are leaving
- Companionship: before leaving home, turn on the television or radio, or give your dog an old coat or item of clothing that belongs to you.

**DISTURBANCES** – Barking episodes can be set off when people come to the door or walk past your property (like the postman). The dog's behaviour is then reinforced as the perceived "intruder" leaves – the dog believes his barking has sent this unwanted guest away! Some dogs bark and act aggressively through the fence at passers-by. This may not only cause a noise nuisance, but also become frightening for strangers outside the house.

- Avoid stimulus: distract your dog with another form of reward at the time it normally barks at a neighbourhood disturbance (e.g. the postman).

**DISCOMFORT** – Pain and discomfort, illness or even being restricted to a small area may be a cause of barking. Dogs left chained or tied up may find it difficult to get exercise or water to drink. If your usually quiet dog suddenly starts to bark excessively, check its environment and perhaps take a trip to the vet.

- Dogs need enough space to move freely in an enclosed backyard. A dog should not be left on a fixed chain for long periods. If a dog has to be chained, it should be on a running chain.

Further information on managing barking can be found on council's website within the '*Managing barking in our community*' information pack.