

Dog Care and Training Tips

- Consider options to keep the dog amused while you are out e.g. Kong toys.
- A radio or tape recorder of your voice can be left on in your absence.
- A safe and secure bed area should be provided for the dog.
- Talk to a vet for advice on neutering and dietary requirements. Although these factors will not solve barking or other behaviour problems directly, neutering may make a dog easier to handle in general. There are also known links between diet and behaviour of dogs, so a change of food may be a useful step in solving the problem, again talk to your vet about suitable diet for your dog.
- Remember that your dog is part of the family. Dogs require company and if you leave them for long periods they are likely to bark more because they are seeking attention. If you have to leave your dog for longer periods, it is recommended for someone to look after the dog while you are away.
- Make sure your dog is given some exercise before you go out. This means the dog is more likely to sleep. Arrangements should be made for the dog to be walked at lunchtime or at the very least allowing the dog to relieve itself.
- If a dog barks for attention, this should be ignored, and only be given attention when it is quiet; this way the dog will learn that barking does not get it attention.
- If your dog barks when it is excited, do not play with it at anti-social times such as very late at night.
- Consider the environment in which your dog is kept. If it barks at people passing, make sure it cannot see them. If the dog is kept in the garden, double slatted or solid panel fencing is recommended to prevent the dog seeing movement.
- Consider using training aids such as training discs/clickers etc. to train your dog.

For more information, contact the Dog Warden Service:

County Buildings, High Street, Linlithgow, EH49 7EZ

Tel: 01506 280000

email: animalwelfare@westlothian.gov.uk

Whilst training, DO NOT:

- Punish the dog. It might mistake it for attention and it could also make it more anxious leading to further problems.
- Consider getting a second dog for company unless you are sure you can care for it. This may not be the solution to the dogs problem.

Aim to train in very short sessions of less than ten minutes duration, as a dog's concentration span is short. Several of these throughout the day on walks and at home, while you wait for the kettle to boil, during commercial breaks or when you have free time in

Separation Anxiety

The cause of this problem behaviour lies in the dog's overly close relationship with its owners when they are at home. This causes anxiety when they leave, because it cannot cope without them. When you are out, the dog may bark in an attempt to call you back home again and because you do eventually return, the dog thinks that his barking was effective – so the dog barks with even more determination next time.

The owner should pretend to leave several times a day, go through the motions of leaving but don't leave.

the evening will soon result in a well trained dog. As the sessions will be short your dog will remain interested and keen to work. Long sessions result in tired, bored dogs and owners. At the end of each session, you should see some progress in terms of what your dog has learnt. Training a dog requires lots of thought by the owner to achieve success. If you cannot get your dog to do what you want, you are likely to become frustrated. At any time if you have any questions or concerns or simply require further training advice please contact the Animal Welfare Officers.

Eventually the dog will become tired of the routine and when the owner does eventually go out the dog will not notice as much.

The time absent from the dog should be built up. The owner should not make a big fuss before leaving the dog and should keep to a low key approach on their return. Gradually this should teach the dog that it is okay to be left alone. Separation anxiety can be a complex and serious problem from some dogs, and it is recommended that for severe cases a qualified animal behaviourist is consulted.

dog barking problem

INFORMATION FOR DOG OWNERS



It is normal for a dog to bark from time to time as barking is a natural form of behaviour for a dog. But when barking persists, or continues for long periods, it can be annoying and upsetting for neighbours.



Dog Barking Problem

Local authorities have a duty to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to investigate any complaint of statutory nuisance*. If satisfied that a statutory nuisance exists, or is likely to occur or recur, the local authority is required to serve an abatement notice on the person responsible. The law means that we can only consider barking which is potentially causing an unreasonable and substantial interference on the use and enjoyment of a person's property. The law also means that we can not take into account particular sensitivities (e.g. light sleeper) or things which don't affect the majority of the public (e.g. shift worker). In order to judge whether barking is causing a problem we must take into account what is unacceptable to the average person. Amongst other things, we may look at:

- ⌚ **Frequency:** for example does the dog regularly bark at every person or dog passing the property or using that part of the street.
- ⌚ **Duration:** is the dog regularly barking, howling or whining for periods in excess of 10 minutes

whether the owners are absent or at home? Does the dog begin barking at something in the street but continue long after it is gone from view?

- ⌚ **Intensity:** how loud the barking is. This may depend on the location of the dog in relation to the person complaining as well as the Individual dog. All dogs have different barks and some may be louder than others.
- ⌚ **Time of day:** whether the dog is barking during the day or during the night.
- ⌚ **Behaviour:** is the dog regularly rushing, jumping, barking or growling aggressively at any of the boundary fences? Is the dog regularly barking at the neighbours, for no apparent reason?

However if the noise is a one off, such as barking due to fireworks, this would not be viewed as problem behaviour. The barking problem should be an ongoing and persistent state of affairs to warrant investigation.

What next?

To start with we will make dog owners aware of the complaint being made against them and their dog and we will give them the opportunity to sort out the problem. If you have had a complaint about your dog barking it is important that you actively investigate the barking yourself and do not rely solely on the information given. This will allow you to find out for yourself how bad the problem is and what triggers it.

Guidelines to help you determine the level of barking include:

- ⌚ Checking with any surrounding neighbours to establish if, when and why the dog may be barking, and whether this is causing a nuisance to them.
- ⌚ Having another neighbour record detail of the dog's barking including date, time and duration for you.
- ⌚ Leave a tape recorder / video camera on when you are out to record whether or not your dog is barking.
- ⌚ Check on the dog regularly at the time of the alleged barking (ensure that the dog is unaware of your presence by returning quietly and unobserved).



Barking is a natural way for a dog to communicate, but a dog that is barking excessively is doing so for a reason, and finding out why the dog is barking is essential in treating the problem. Once you have found out when your dog is barking you can normally find out why. For example, if it's when you are not home, the dog may be attempting to call you back.

In the first instance we will always aim to work with dog owners to improve the barking problem and will normally allow two weeks for the owner to put measures in place to tackle the problem. If barking continues to be a problem, the complainant may then be asked to complete a dog barking diary setting out the duration, time and date of the barking. The information will then be reviewed to help us decide what action to take next.

Further actions may include:

- ⌚ Making visits to witness the extent of the noise problem, using the diary as guide;
- ⌚ Installation of noise equipment in the complainant's property to witness extent of the problem;
- ⌚ Offering you, the dog owner further advice in controlling the dog's behaviour; or
- ⌚ Recommending that you, the dog owner seek professional help to modify/ manage the dog's behaviour.

If it is determined that a statutory nuisance exists a noise abatement notice will be served on you. Failure to comply with an abatement notice is an offence and may result in legal proceedings and/or abatement of the nuisance by the Local Authority. This could result in a fixed penalty notice being issued or a report to the Procurator Fiscal.

An alternative to our investigation is that the complainant may wish to take their own private action through Livingston JP Court, under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 section 49.

Advice for Owners

The main causes of a dog barking are:

- ⌚ Boredom
- ⌚ Alarm/Fear
- ⌚ Attention seeking
- ⌚ Guarding
- ⌚ Excitement or
- ⌚ Separation Anxiety

If you are not sure why your dog is barking, or what training methods to use contact a dog trainer, speak to your vet or ask your Animal Welfare Officer for advice.

Training can be a very effective way to relieve problem barking, but only if the correct training techniques are used to tackle the cause. Incorrect methods may be ineffective or may make the situation worse.



*Under section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended.