

Things that can help are:

- Consider options to keep the dog amused while you are out e.g. Kong toys.
- A radio or tape recorder of the your voice can be left on in your absence.
- A safe and secure bed area should be provided for the dog.
- Neutering by itself will not solve barking or other behaviour problems, but it may make a dog easier to handle in general. Talk to a vet for advice on this subject as well as dietary requirements (as excess protein in a dogs diet can aggravate behavioural problems).
- Remember that your dog is part of the family. Dogs are pack animals and require company, 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 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.

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 dogs' concentration span is short. Several of these throughout the day on walks and at home, while you wait for the kettle to boil, or during commercial breaks or when you have free

time in 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 Dog Warden.

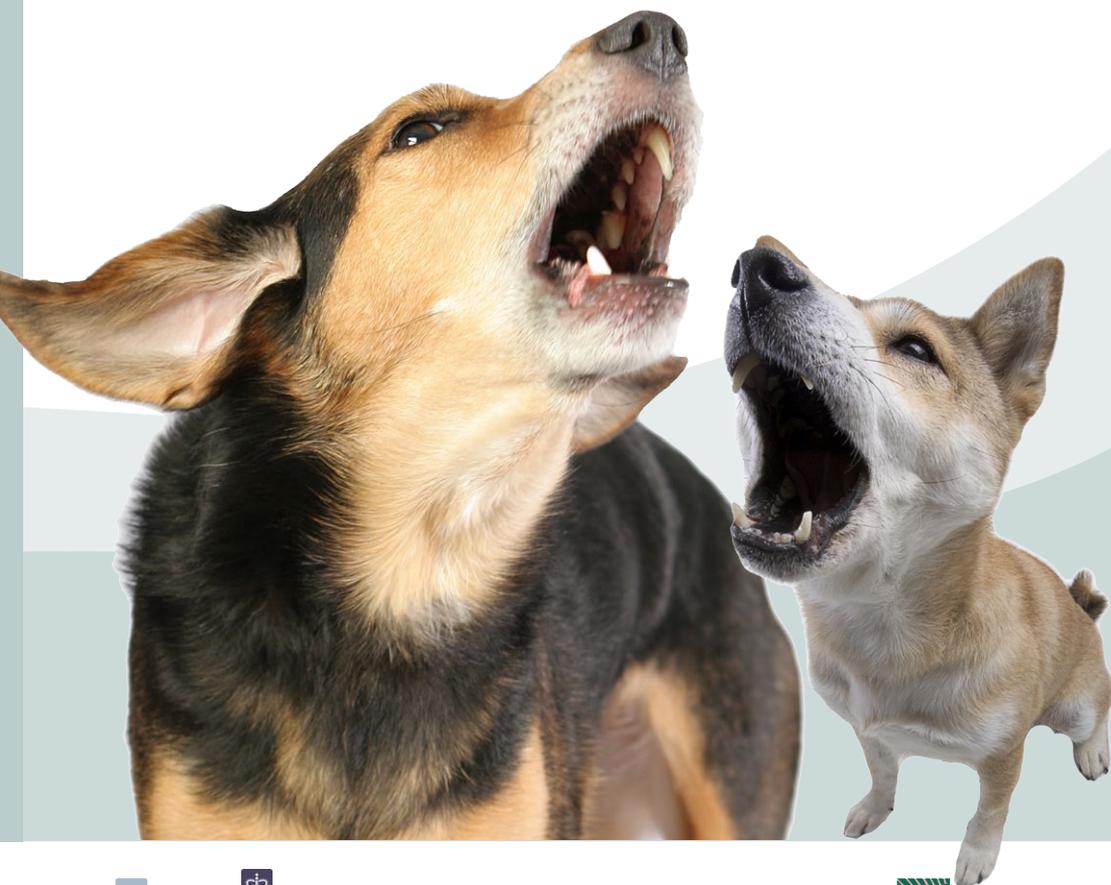
For more information, contact the Dog Warden Service:

By phone on **01506 282500**

By e-mail on **dogwarden@westlothian.gov.uk**

dog barking problem

INFORMATION FOR DOG OWNERS



westlothian.gov.uk



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

Sometimes barking is a sign of a neglected or mistreated dog, but not always. The law means that we can only consider barking which would be “an unacceptable interference with the comfort or amenity of neighbours.” 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 what is unacceptable to the average person, the following criteria are considered:

- ⌚ Dog regularly barks at every person or dog passing the property or using that part of the street, with barking continuing for a period of time, sometimes long after the person has gone from view
- ⌚ Dog regularly barking, howling or whining for periods in excess of 10 minutes whether the owners are absent or at home
- ⌚ Dog regularly rushing, jumping, barking or growling aggressively at any of the boundary fences;
- ⌚ Dog regularly barking during the night
- ⌚ Dog regularly barking at the neighbours, for no apparent reason.

If the noise was 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 intervention. Only proceed further if you are convinced that the barking you are experiencing meets some or all of the above criteria.

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 investigate the barking 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
- ⌚ Have another neighbour record details of the dogs barking, date, time, duration
- ⌚ Leave a tape recorder / video camera on when you are out, preferably voice- activated and
- ⌚ 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. If you have established when your dog is barking you can normally ascertain why. For example, if it's when you are not home, the dog may be attempting to call you back.



The main causes of a dog barking are:

- ④ Boredom
- ④ Alarm/Fear
- ④ Attention seeking
- ④ Guarding
- ④ Excitement or
- ④ Separation Anxiety

At this point if you are unsure what training methods to use to reduce the dog barking, contact a dog trainer, speak to your vet or ask the Dog Warden. The complainer may 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.

This may include:

- ④ Visit you to witness the extent of the noise problem, using the diary as guide;
- ④ Installation of noise equipment in the complainants property to witness extent of the problem;
- ④ Offering you, the dog owner further advice in controlling the dog's behaviour; or
- ④ Recommending that you, the dog owner seek professional help.

Should our visits determine that the degree and frequency of the dog barking is causing a nuisance this evidence will be passed to our Environmental Health Officers. 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 seizure of the offending dog(s).

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.

Training Tips

If the dog barks when you are out, it is attempting to call its owners back home again, but because they do eventually return, the dog thinks that their barking was effective – so the dog barks with even more determination next time. 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.

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