

Barking Dogs

With the growing population and intensification of housing, we are creating an environment for less tolerance of noisy dogs. Dogs can bark as loud as 100 decibels. That is equivalent to the noise of a printing plant or a jackhammer at 15 metres (Harris Handbook of Noise Control.)

Why do dogs bark?

Barking is a perfectly natural characteristic of the canine species. Right from birth a puppy learns that whining and yelping is a care-seeking noise which attracts the attention of its mother. Over the years we have bred dogs for their ability to bark to ward off intruders or to round up stock, etc. However, the concern arises when the barking becomes excessive and is loud and persistent, creating a nuisance.

It could be:

- **Environmental**

Provide plenty of shade, shelter, food and fresh water. Regularly treat the dog and kennel area for irritating fleas and flies. Ensure that the kennel is a suitable size and kept in a clean condition.

If you suspect that children are teasing your dog you will need to take steps to stop this.

- **Territorial Defence**

Protecting the property from intruders.

- **Attention Seeking**

Dogs are social animals and prefer company.

- **A Learned Behaviour**

A dog may learn that barking causes the owner to make a fuss over it.

- **Excitement**

Vigorous play or the sight and sound of children playing nearby increases the dog's state of arousal.

- **Breed**

Some dogs are bred to bark.

- **Boredom**

An uninteresting environment with no company and a lack of exercise.

- **Self-Stimulation**

An obsessive-compulsive behaviour. This can be the result of excessive stress or boredom.

- **Separation Anxiety**

Some dogs are too dependent on their human owners.

- **Contact Seeking**

Communication with other dogs.

- **Fear or Physical Discomfort**

Always consider a vet check especially if the barking is out of character.

Barking is often the symptom of an underlying problem. The key to resolving the barking is to identify and treat the problem.

By determining the type of barking being expressed (barking, whining, howling, etc.) and by observing the dog's behaviour, you may be able to narrow down the underlying problem. Once you have established this you can then consider the best course of action to take.