



## Why Do Dogs Bark?

Barking, along with whining, howling and growling, is a dog's natural means of communication. A dog may bark for a number of reasons; to induce play, discipline young, warn of danger, threaten intruders, or he may bark because he's curious. None of these reasons tend to result in excessive or annoying barking. They are short lived and are specific to an occasion. Barking for companionship or for reward (food, freedom, etc.) is the most likely to develop into problem barking.

*A barking problem is much easier to prevent than to cure!*

### Causes of Problem Barking

In order to retrain a problem barker it is necessary to determine what factors may be triggering the behavior.

1. Genetics – some breeds are more prone to barking (eg. terriers) although almost any breed can exhibit excessive barking.
2. Physical need – the dog is hot, cold, hungry or thirsty. This is the dog's way of requesting that you accommodate one of his needs. A dog may become a problem barker due to insufficient exercise – the pent up energy is released through barking.
3. Emotional need – the dog is bored, excited or anxious. This can be the dog's way of requesting attention or may be a compulsive behavior resulting from a frustrated need for

social and/or mental stimulation.

4. Environment – improper confinement (restrictive tethering, being locked in a pen alone for long periods, lack of shelter) can all lead to a dog that barks excessively. Additionally, excessive barking may be triggered by environmental cues (other dogs barking, passing cars, sirens, storms, etc.).

### Solutions

Once you have determined the situation(s) that cause your dog to bark excessively, there are steps that can be taken that may control or curb the problem barking.

Give both negative and positive reinforcements. If the dog barks, use an appropriate correction and make sure you correct while the barking is occurring. DO NOT reinforce the barking behavior by giving in to the dog's demand for attention. Reward the dog when he is quiet and well behaved.

#### *Increasing level of severity:*

- Make sure your dog's physical needs are met.
- Do not leave you dog alone in the back yard longer than necessary – dogs are social animals and like to be with their “pack”.
- If a dog is to be an outdoor dog, increase his activity level. Ensure he has bones or chew toys. Consider getting him a companion.
- Move the run or pen to an area where the dog can't see or hear whatever may stimulate the barking (eg. children, pets, etc.).
- Turn on a radio (low volume) to cover noises that may induce barking and to keep the dog company.
- Place hand tightly around muzzle and growl a “Quiet” or “No”. Do not shout as this may encourage the dog to bark more. Be consistent.
- Throw something on the ground near the dog (not at it) which will make a loud startling clatter (penny tin, chain).
- Squirt lemon juice in the mouth (good for whiners).
- If your dog only barks when you're not home you may want to consider “setting up” your dog. Set up a departure – make sure your dog sees you drive away.

Return silently to make the necessary corrections. This procedure may have to be repeated several times.

- If you trust your neighbors consider enlisting their help in applying necessary corrections when you're not home. But remember, **THEY** need to be consistent.
- Enroll in a training class. A well trained dog is seldom a problem barker and training will increase your dog's confidence and control.
- Bark collars – there are several types available.
  - (1) Citronella Collar – releases a spray of citronella when the dog barks. Sensitivity is variable and it may be possible to rent a collar.
  - (2) “The Husher” – muzzle type device that applies resistance. Dog is still able to drink, etc. but becomes fatigued when he attempts to bark excessively.
  - (3) Ultrasonic “beeping” Collar – may be bark activated or remote activated. Should only be used with proper knowledge and restraint.
  - (4) “Shock” Collar – may be bark activated or remote activated. A last resort option and should only be used by a professional trainer.
- The surgical removal of the larynx (debarking). Is costly and not guaranteed.

### DO NOT USE BB GUNS OR SLINGSHOTS

All dogs have different personalities. Some may require a heavy correction while others will respond well to a simple verbal reprimand. So match the correction to the temperament of the dog.

**Most Important: have patience and be consistent.**

#### Questions?

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