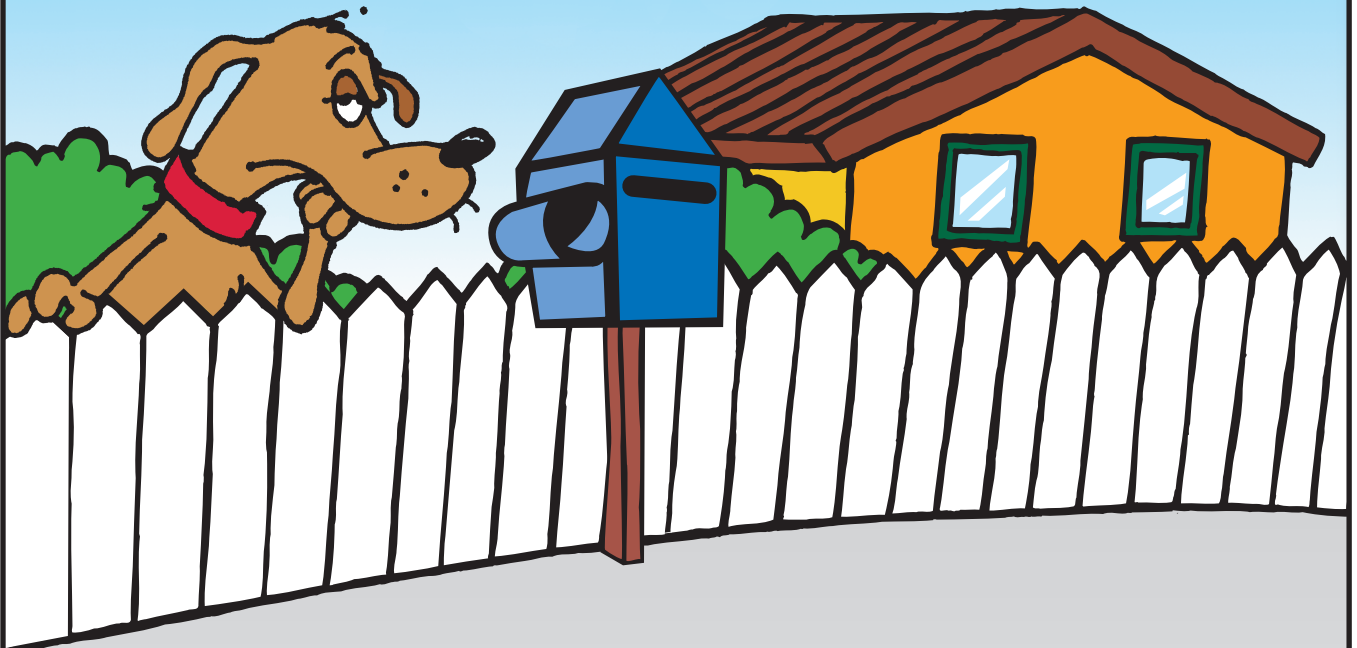


Barking As A Result Of Boredom



Some dogs get bored very easily, and as a result they "misbehave" by barking, digging holes and engaging in other "destructive" behaviour. A simple solution could be to increase the stimulation so that the environment is not so boring.

Something must be reinforcing the behaviour otherwise it would stop.

Suggested treatment methods:

1. Increase the stimulation

Provide an environment that is more interesting e.g. give the dog objects to keep it busy like a large beef bone to chew on or commercially produced chew toys.

Place the dog in a position where it can see more activity during the day (provided the dog does not respond territorially).

Use a rotation system with toys e.g. a different toy to play with each day.

Provide a digging pit. This is not encouraging bad behaviour because digging is a normal behaviour. Your guidance will soon teach the dog that the digging pit is the only area where this activity is permitted. Bury treats or toys in the pit to keep the dog entertained.

2. Spend more time with the dog

If this is not possible you could engage a puppy walker or ask your neighbour to spend some time with the dog during the day.

3. Provide daily exercise

Especially free running exercise, outside the dog's normal territory.

4. Anti-barking collar

An anti-barking collar addresses the barking; however it does not necessarily address the problem which is causing the barking.

Discourage barking at inappropriate times and reinforce/praise silence.

5. Discipline

It is important to understand that any discipline needs to be carried out at the exact time of the inappropriate behaviour. When you arrive home to find holes dug in the garden it is too late to use punishment. It may be more appropriate to banish the dog from human company for a while.

Talk to your local Animal Control Officers. They have a vast knowledge of dealing with barking dog issues and they will be happy to assist.

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.