

Barking As A Result Of Territorial Defence



Although some guarding aspects are desirable, you should discourage any aggressive behaviour when it is shown at inappropriate times.

Suggested treatment methods:

1. Keep the dog indoors

A guard dog will be much more effective indoors. By the time an intruder is in a position to harm the dog, the dog is in a position to defend itself. A guard dog is more easily neutralised if it is running around in your yard.

2. Training

Create a distraction when aggression and alarm barking is shown at inappropriate times. Praise the dog for not barking, for example when someone walks past the property.

Excessive alarm barking is likely to develop as a result of any noise or movement. You must try to minimise visual and audio disturbance. It is of no use having a guard dog that barks at everything in the street.

3. Discipline

If your dog responds well to discipline then you can initially reprimand it for barking; however you should reinforce the silence immediately.

4. Anti-barking collar

If you are trying to discourage all barking, including territorial defence, an anti-barking collar may be appropriate.

If you wish to encourage territorial defence, it is a matter of training your dog to bark only when your property is challenged. If you choose to have a guard dog, then you must accept that you will have extra work to do to discourage inappropriate alarm barking. Most dogs simply need to be taught when it is appropriate to bark and when it is not.

Problems associated with having a guard dog:

- A dog cannot be taught to distinguish between a lawful and an unlawful intruder.
- A member of the public, on lawful business, has a right to enter a property and knock on the door.
- A pedestrian has a right to lean over a fence to retrieve his hat if it blows off his head.
- Guarding is a behaviour associated with aggression. Most dogs that are encouraged to guard will bite.
- If you encourage your dog to bark at intruders you are permitting the dog to take on the role of "protector". This may give the dog the perception that it is higher ranked than you are.
- Guard dogs usually have a higher "prey drive" (the instinct to chase and kill) than most other breeds of dog. Guarding or territorial aggression, combined with a higher prey drive, creates the potential for very serious damage, usually to an innocent victim.
- Every dog escapes at one time or another. It may only be a matter of time before someone makes the mistake of leaving a door or a gate open.
- The penalties for owning a dog that attacks are severe.

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.