

Dear Neighbour / Dog Owner

Please accept this card as a neighbourly notification that your dog is causing concern with its level of:

Barking Howling Crying Other _____

This is occurring: When you aren't home During the day At Night On weekends

Comments: (specific times and dates, known causes of the barking etc.)

If you would like to discuss this situation further, my contact details are:
(leave blank if wishing to remain anonymous)

The City of Bunbury encourages mutual respect and friendly communication between neighbours in the community. With this in mind, a neighbour is providing this information to you with the aim to raise concern for your dog and understands you may not be aware of the barking situation and hopes this will help you reduce the barking.

This card has been supplied by the City of Bunbury Rangers for use by the community. Any comments or information added to this flyer after publication is not a representation of the City of Bunbury and its values. For more information please see the City's website at www.bunbury.wa.gov.au

Simple tips for effective dog diaries

- Have two or more neighbours keep a dog diary.
- When logging an instance of barking over a long period of time be sure to include whether the noise is constant or intermittent.
- Avoid comments on the dog diary that identify who the complainants are.
- Clearly show when the nuisance barking is at its worst.
- Great care is to be taken when compiling the diary/record as you may need to rely on the records you keep should you be called to give evidence in Court.

If the Officers are satisfied there has been enough evidence provided that there is a dog barking nuisance, the City may then serve the owner of the dog with a Noise Abatement Notice (The Order). The Order is in effect for 6 (six) months and the dog owner must comply with the Order.

If during the 6 (six) month period (from the date it was issued) the owner has not complied and there is a further barking nuisance contravention a modified penalty (infringement) of \$200 can be issued.

Following the infringement, if the nuisance barking is still happening, the City can take court action against the dog owner.

The completion of the accurate diaries is necessary to provide sufficient evidence for the City to act on.

Simple tips for dog owners

When receiving a letter of complaint from the City, the dog owner should understand the person who lodged a complaint may not have spoken to you personally for several reasons. To rectify the problem at the first level of complaint the dog owner can:

- Check with nearby neighbours to establish when and how often the barking may occur.
- At the times the nuisance barking is alleged to be occurring, try leaving home and returning, without the dog noticing. It is recommended this practice be repeated a number of times to confirm or refute the claim, or to establish a pattern to the barking.
- Have an independent neighbour keep a diary of your dog's barking, asking them to observe and report if there is a trigger. These observations and recordings may help to establish the duration, time and nature of the barking or confirm there is indeed a problem that needs to be addressed.
- Determine if other factors (neighbours, children, local youth) are causing the barking to occur.

If you discover your dog is barking:

- Try covering gaps or cracks in fencing to prevent the dog from seeing a distraction or use other means such as shade cloth to block the dogs view.
- Regular exercise and socialisation with other dogs can help keep a dog calm and reduce barking.
- Place a radio between the distraction and the dog, soft music or a radio playing can help block noises that can irritate a dog.
- Seek help from an animal behaviourist for more information.

BARKING DOGS

Information for dog owners



Rangers- 9792 7106
Office- 9792 7000
4 Stephen Street
Bunbury , WA , 6230.

Introduction

The City of Bunbury can fully appreciate that a barking or nuisance dog can be disruptive; however, the treatment and solution for a nuisance dog can often be a lengthy and complex issue.

Barking, whimpering, howling, whining, yelping and moaning are sounds made by dogs for communication. However, excessive noise can be a real nuisance, especially for neighbours.

Do I live next to a nuisance dog?

Under the Western Australian Dog Act 1976 a dog is considered a nuisance if:

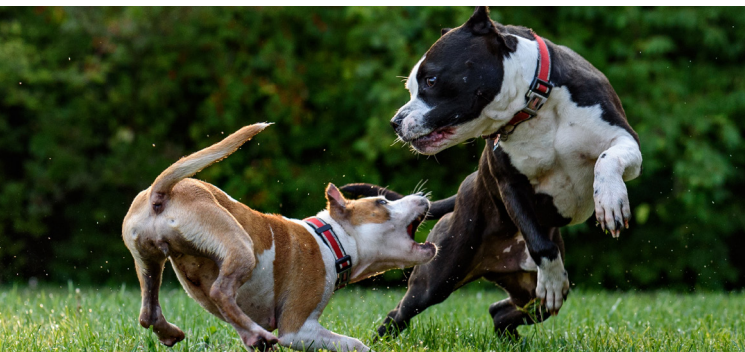
- The dog makes a noise by barking or otherwise that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any place.
- Generally speaking, examples of possible nuisance noise or barking can include:
 - Barking at passing traffic, people or other dogs that continues for some time after the distraction has passed.
 - Barking regularly during the hours of darkness.
 - Barking, whining and/or howling for regular periods in excess of 15min when the owners are absent or are inside the house and the dog is outside.
 - Barking associated with other behavioural problems.

What you shouldn't do?

You should refrain from doing any of the following –

- Banging on the fence
- Harming the dog in any way
- Threatening the dog or owner
- Leave rude notes for the owner
- Leave the barking for a long time before reporting it

These actions will probably worsen the situation. If you feel driven to take these actions, call the City and arrange for a Ranger to discuss your concerns with the dog owner.



What can I do?

Dogs bark for many reasons including excitement when being exercised or when owners return home or on a longer term basis from boredom or to protect their territory.

It can be very difficult to collect evidence of the frequency and loudness of a dog's barking.

Often dog owners are not aware if their dog is a nuisance to neighbours because they are not at home when the dog barks, and/or the dog is not barking when they arrive home.

The City recommends neighbours speak with dog owners as soon as the dog becomes a nuisance.

Dog owners should be informed as to when the dog is barking and how it affects their neighbours.

The complainant should be courteous, informative and supportive of any suggestions to rectify the problem.

However, if the dog owner fails to accept there is a problem, then a complaint should be lodged with the City.

Barking Dog Diary

Following a complaint of nuisance barking the City will send the effected neighbour(s) a copy of the Barking Dog Procedure and a ten day diary.

To better assess a case of nuisance barking the City suggests that two or more neighbours take part in the diary recordings.

The complainant(s) are given 28 days to complete and return the diary to the City.

If the diary is not completed correctly, signed, or does not support the requirements that constitute nuisance barking the City will be unable to take any further action in regards to the complaint.

If the diary supports the complaint of nuisance barking the City will contact the dog owner to arrange a visit to discuss the complaint further.

A letter will also be provided to the dog owner detailing the times the nuisance barking is allegedly occurring. This will be the first opportunity for the dog owner to abate the nuisance.

The main objective of the City's Dog Diary procedure is to satisfactorily resolve dog barking complaints as early as possible. The successful resolution of a barking dog complaint relies on the full and timely participation of the complainants and of the dog owner.

For more information on the City's procedure or to get a copy of a dog barking diary please call Community Law Safety and Emergency Management on 9792 7106.

SOME HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR THE DOG OWNER

Boredom

- If you take your dog for a good walk in the morning they will be more likely to rest until you come home - Keep their toys in a toy box and alternate the toys they have access to each day - Try putting some of your dog's daily food allowance into a Kong toy or treat ball so they have to work to retrieve their snacks. - organise a 'dog walker' to walk your dog in the middle of the day.

Separation anxiety

Dogs are social animals and it is normal for them to become anxious when they are left alone for the first time. Take care to teach your dog how to cope with being left alone at a young age. Begin by sending your dog outside for short periods of time while you are still at home. Make sure they have a toy to play with or raw bone to chew on while they are outside so the experience is a positive one.

Gradually extend the length of time you are leaving your dog alone. When you do leave the house make sure that they have somewhere safe to retreat to such as a kennel. Make sure that they receive plenty of exercise and that they have a supply of toys and treats to keep them entertained while you are away. Do not fuss over your dog when you come home – make sure both your departure and return are quiet and unexcited.

Territorial behaviour

It is natural for your dog to want to warn you about potential intruders.

Your dog may not be able to distinguish between welcome visitors, people strolling past your home and intruders. Try and predict the postman's arrival and offer your dog a delicious treat or favourite toy. Only reward your dog when he/she is calm and not barking. With time your dog may begin to associate a person passing the house with something good rather than someone to protect you from.

If your dog barks at your neighbours when they are in their garden it is probably also because he is protecting your territory. Again, make sure you have some tasty treats at hand so that your dog associates your neighbours with the food (only give the treat when your dog is calm and not barking). You may also consider asking your friendly neighbours to treat your dog and supply them with their own stockpile – this is preferable to having them yell at your dog in frustration - yelling at a barking dog will only tend to reinforce the barking and protective behaviour. Barking is also reinforced when owners yell or scold their own barking dog - this is called negative reinforcement and should be avoided. Successfully treating excessive barking relies on positive reinforcement - that is, reward good behaviour and avoid reinforcing 'unwanted' behaviour.

If your dog is barking at the dog next door arrange a meeting time and supervise play between the two. Fun play time should quell fear-related territorial behaviour and alleviate boredom. Do not ignore or scold territorial barking as your dog will become confused and anxious if his attempts to protect you are negatively received. You might also find that one day your dog alerts you to a real threat!

Communication

Dogs can bark as a means of normal communication. They may bark when calling out to other dogs or respond to other barking dogs or when communicating with its human owners.