

Animal Noise – Dogs

Brisbane City Council

Council recognises the benefits of responsible pet ownership and supports the keeping of companion animals in our community and in our homes. Dogs, like people, like to communicate, and make noise in their day to day lives for a variety of reasons, so a reasonable level of noise should be anticipated. Excessive barking is something that can have significant impacts on surrounding residents, and therefore we need to ensure that we are conscious and proactive in managing the noise levels of our companion animals.

In Brisbane, the *Animals Local Law 2017* (the Local Law) specifies a person must not keep an animal if it causes a noise nuisance. Animal noise can be considered a nuisance when it unreasonably disrupts or inhibits activities at adjoining premises or nearby residential land.

Why do dogs bark?

Barking is a natural behaviour for dogs and some limited barking is acceptable. However, barking can be excessive if it occurs for extended periods of time or at inappropriate times of the day or night. Ongoing barking is often a symptom of another problem and taking time to understand the underlying issue can be the first step to resolving a problem, both for the dog and neighbourhood. A dog may bark because it is:

- bored, lonely and seeks attention
- suffering from separation anxiety or distress
- scared or fearful
- feeling that its territory is threatened
- unwell or in pain

Ways to reduce barking

All dogs bark for numerous reasons, and solutions to correct the behaviour vary from one dog to the next. Correcting a noisy dog is not a quick fix and it is not realistic to expect a dog to cease making noise altogether. Knowing when and for how long the barking occurs will help identify what triggers your dog to bark. Once the trigger is identified, barking can be controlled through several behavioural and environmental changes. The goal should be to decrease, rather than eliminate, the amount of noise. The following table provides possible solutions to some causes of barking:

		Possible solutions					
		Exercise	Training	Enrichment	Change routine	Change environment	Vet check
Cause of barking	Lack of stimulation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Over stimulation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Excessive energy	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Native wildlife	✓	✓	✓		✓	
	Separation Anxiety	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Health Issue		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



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- TIP 1:** Understand why the dog is making noise – find the trigger for the behaviour.
- TIP 2:** Attempt to change the behaviour – this could be simple reward based or positive reinforcement obedience training.
- TIP 3:** Look to the area in which the animal is kept. Changes to their keeping arrangements may reduce excessive noise. For example:
- exercise – an active animal makes less noise.
 - company – social time is important for animals.
 - stimulation – a bored animal makes noise to attract attention.
 - fence design – if possible, reduce sight to outside disturbances such as pedestrians, cars or other animals.
 - sleeping arrangements – simply moving the dog inside at night may reduce triggers.
- TIP 4:** Engage a professional. There are times excessive barking may have an underlying cause not known to you, and by consulting your vet they may be able to provide expert advice and options to assist.

Council's Investigation Process

Council investigates all reports of animal noise to determine if the complaint is substantiated under the Local Law. In many instances, the complaint investigation process for animal noise can be lengthy as Council works directly with the animal keeper and complainant to find practical, long term solutions.

Approach your neighbour

Council encourages residents affected by animal noise to contact the keeper of the animal to discuss the matter, the noise, its affects and potential solutions. The keeper of the animal may not know there is an issue and a resolution may be easily achieved by simply letting the keeper know exactly what is occurring. Once the issue has been discussed, Council recommends allowing 28 days for the animal keeper to implement strategies to alleviate the noise.

Notification Letter and Noise Diary

When an amicable solution is unable to be achieved, Council will write to both the animal keeper and affected person(s) to suggest methods for reducing animal noise. The affected person(s) are also asked to complete a noise diary for a minimum of seven consecutive days and return it to Council.

Engagement

If a noise diary is returned to Council, our Animal Services team will contact the affected person(s) and discuss the matter. Where sufficient evidence has been attained, the officer will contact the animal keeper to provide education and practical problem solving about the noise nuisance.

Compliance Investigation

Should the matter not be resolved through education, formal compliance action against the animal keeper may be taken if Council confirms a Local Law noise nuisance is occurring. Animal keepers may face penalties including fines and Compliance Notices. There will also be situations where there is no breach of the Local Law, and no action will be taken.

For more information visit www.brisbane.qld.gov.au and search 'Animal Noise' or call Council's 24-hour contact Centre on (07) 3403 8888.



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