

Some Common Myths About Barking Dogs

Myth 1 - A dog that barks a lot is a good watch dog.

FALSE! Dogs that bark excessively make poor security systems, as neighbours often ignore the barking.

Myth 2 - "My dog does not bark when I am home, so it does not bark when I am out".

FALSE! Many dogs bark because of anxiety and isolation. Most complaints are about dogs which bark when their owners are not home.

Myth 3 - Sterilisation will stop a dog from barking.

FALSE! Sterilisation does not stop barking except where dogs are barking at neighbouring dogs of the same sex or when a male dog can sense a bitch in season. However, sterilisation is strongly recommended for other reasons.

Myth 4 - It is natural for dogs to bark a lot.

FALSE! Barking is one of the dogs main ways of communicating. However, it is NOT normal for a dog to bark at every noise or passer by nor to bark for long periods of time.

Myth 5 - Dogs bark because they are lonely need another dog for company.

FALSE! Getting a second dog does NOT usually prevent or fix a barking problem.

Myth 6 - Dogs only bark too much if they are teased, bored or not exercised.

FALSE! Dogs bark for many reasons including breeding, inappropriate confinement, passing distractions, isolation, guarding, anxiety, discomfort and attention seeking. It is important to work out why the dog is barking before the problem can be solved.

Some Simple Tips For Barking Dogs

- Make sure you do not reward your dog for barking too much. Don't let the dog inside or give it attention when it barks. Instead give the dog attention when it is quiet.
- If the dog is barking at people or noises on the other side of the fence, move the dog to another part of the yard or put up a barrier to keep the dog away from that area.
- A radio playing softly may help to block any noises which the dog is barking at. Place the radio between the dog and the noise.
- If the dog barks at regular disturbances such as children walking to school or rubbish trucks, keep the dog inside or in an enclosed area at these times.
- If the dog races along a path or fence barking at passing distractions, put barriers or obstacles in the dog's way to slow it down.
- Ensure that the dog has adequate exercise and obedience training.
- Make sure that the dog has food, water and shelter from the weather.
- If the dog is barking at gaps and cracks in the fence, fill in the gaps.
- If the dog is barking at people it can see passing by, try blocking the dog's view.

- An anti-barking collar may be useful for most but not all barking dogs. Ask your veterinarian for details or the RSPCA.
- Teach the dog to stop barking on command. When the dog is barking give a firm command such as "Cease" and call the dog to you. Praise the dog when it stops barking. If you have trouble getting the dog's attention try making a loud noise. If the dog will not listen to you, then your dog will need more obedience training.

Dogs bark for many reasons and if these simple tips do not help you, seek further advice.

Your veterinarian may be able to help you or refer you to an animal behaviourist. The RSPCA will also be able to assist you.

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