



# Santa Rosa County Animal Services

## **Barking: What dog owners need to know.**

Barking complaints are bad news for everyone. For you, the dog owner, because people are usually startled (and very unhappy) to find an Animal Control Officer at their door; for the complainant, because they probably lost sleep last night; and for us, because we're trying to deal with people with seriously frayed tempers. Sometimes solutions are not simple. We usually don't take the dog and we can't magically offer a single solution to make the problem go away. A citation could be filed against the owner, but that requires two steps, and the dog owner has ample warning that it will occur. A citation is based on statements made by those who are disturbed by the noise. If a dog owner is willing to work with the problem (and the neighbors), citation is usually not necessary.

### **What does having a "Barking Complaint" filed against me mean?**

When a neighbor is bothered by habitual or continual barking, they call us. An Officer will contact you. This is the first step in solving the problem. We know that most people want to be good neighbors, and many times a dog owner is unaware that his or her dog is barking. The Officer is letting you know there may be a problem in the neighborhood that you can do something about.

What if my dog isn't barking?

If another dog in the area is responsible, help the Officer locate the correct dog.

### **Why does my dog bark?**

Dogs are social animals. They can easily become bored. When dogs are bored, they bark or howl. Dogs kept on chains or in small outside kennels are more apt to bark than those kept in fenced yards or in the house. If the only attention a dog receives is the punishment it receives for barking, the behavior continues. Chew toys and plenty of attention and exercise are the best ways to keep your dog from barking.

### **The neighbors' dogs run loose and cause my dog to bark. What can I do?**

No one has to tolerate loose dogs in their neighborhood, if they live in a leash law area. Talk to the owners of the dogs that run loose and tell them you are interested in keeping the neighborhood peaceful. You can confine the dogs if they continue to run and call Animal Services. If you know where the dog(s) live, jot down the house address and call it in to Animals Services.

### **But I want my dog to be a watch dog. I have to let him bark, don't I?**

A good watch or guard dog quickly learns to bark only at persons entering its property. A dog that barks at every person walking by or at neighbors, is useless as a watch dog. Once your dog has alerted you that someone is on the property, praise him and tell him "quiet" or "that's enough." The best place for a guard dog is inside the house with the family that it protects.

### **I heard that my dog can bark all he wants until 10:00 pm. Is that correct?**

NO! There is no time of the day that dogs can legally create a nuisance. A dog barking at 2 pm is just as annoying to a daysleeper as a dog barking at 2 am is to you.

### **Should I get my dog a second dog to keep him company? Will that help?**

Remember, dogs are social animals by nature. They become bored and frustrated when left alone. A second dog *can* help because it keeps both dogs from getting bored. *Keep in mind, though, if your dog barks because he has not been trained to be a good canine citizen, you may just wind up with two barking dogs!* The best answer is to keep your dog actively involved with your family, healthy, exercised and provided with chew toys to keep him from becoming bored.

### **I've heard about some new things like shock collars and high frequency tone producers that are supposed to work. What about these devices?**



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These devices may have a part in a broader training regimen, but rarely work all by themselves. Ask a reputable trainer for information about how they work.

## **What about surgical debarking?**

A drastic measure, but available. Ask your veterinarian.

## **Training Tip**

Barking is a means of community communication in dogs. When one dog begins barking, the other members of the community join in. If you yell at your dog to stop barking, he interprets this as your "joining in" and probably will not stop barking. You need to make a loud noise (a sound interrupt) – such as a shaker can (a small can with pebbles in it) to get his attention and to stop the barking. As soon as the dog is silent, tell your dog in a firm voice "(name)", that's enough." If the dog stays silent, immediately praise him with "good, that's enough, good." Use a happy voice. Timing is extremely important – issue the command "that's enough" only after the dog has stopped barking. Repeat this procedure several times, as necessary.