

## How to deal with your barking dog

It's perfectly normal for dogs to bark from time to time. Barking is a form of communication for your dog. However, continual barking for long periods of time is a sign that your dog has a problem that needs addressing. Excessive barking is in violation of the CRD's animal control bylaw. If your dog's barking has created neighbourhood tension, it's time to take steps to train your pet.

Your neighbours can help you determine when and for how long your dog barks and what's causing him to bark. You can also drive or walk around the block and watch and listen, or start a recording device when you leave.

### Social Isolation/ Frustration/Attention-Seeking Causes

- Your dog is left alone for long periods without opportunities for human interaction.
- His environment is barren, without playmates or toys.
- He's a puppy or adolescent (under three years old) and doesn't have other outlets for his energy.
- He's a particularly active dog (such as the herding or sporting breeds) who needs a "job" to be happy.

#### Recommendations

- Walk your dog daily—it's good mental and physical exercise.
- Teach your dog some new commands and/or tricks and practice them every day for five to ten minutes.

- Take an obedience or agility class with your dog.
- Provide interesting toys to keep your dog busy when you're not home (Kong-type toys filled with treats or busy-box toys).
- If your dog is barking to get your attention, spend more time with him (petting, grooming, playing, exercising).
- Dogs are family members; keep your dog inside when you're unable to supervise him.
- Let your neighbours know that you're actively working on the barking problem.
- When you have to leave your dog for extended periods of time, take him to a "doggie day care" or have a friend or neighbour walk and/or play with him.

### Territorial/Protective Causes

- The barking occurs in the presence of "intruders," such as the mail carrier, children walking to school or other dogs.
- Your dog's posture while he's barking appears threatening—tail held high and ears up and forward.
- You've encouraged your dog to be responsive to people and noises outside.

#### Recommendations

Teach your dog a "quiet" command. When he begins to bark at a passer-by, say "quiet" and interrupt his barking by shaking a can filled with pennies or squirting water at his mouth with a spray bottle or squirt gun. This will cause him to stop barking momentarily. While he's quiet, say "good quiet" and pop a tasty treat into his mouth. The loud noise or squirt isn't meant to punish, rather it's to startle him into being quiet so you can reward him. If your dog is frightened by the noise or squirt bottle, find an alternative method of interrupting his barking (throw a toy or ball toward him).

Desensitize your dog to the stimulus that triggers the barking. Ask someone to walk by your yard, starting far enough away so that your dog isn't barking, then reward him for quiet behavior as he obeys a "sit" or "down" command. Use a very special food reward such as little pieces of cheese or meat. It may take several sessions before the person can come close without your dog barking. When the person can come very close without your dog barking, have them feed him a treat or throw a toy for him.



- If your dog barks while inside the house when you're home, call him to you, have him obey a command, such as "sit" or "down," and reward him with praise and a treat.
- Don't encourage barking for any reason.
- Have your dog spayed or neutered to decrease territorial behavior.

### Fears & Phobias Causes

- The barking occurs when he's exposed to loud noises, such as thunderstorms, firecrackers or construction equipment.
- Your dog's posture indicates fear—ears back, tail held low.

#### Recommendations

- Identify what's frightening your dog and desensitize him to it. You may need professional help with the desensitization process. Check with your veterinarian about anti-anxiety medication while you work on behavior modification.
- Mute noise from outside by leaving your dog in a basement or windowless bathroom and leave on a television, radio or loud fan. Block off your dog's access to outdoor views by closing curtains or doors to certain rooms.



Piper Falk

## Separation Anxiety Causes

- Barking occurs only when you're gone and starts as soon as, or shortly after, you leave.
- Your dog displays other behaviours that reflect a strong attachment to you, such as following you from room to room, frantic greetings or reacting anxiously to your preparations to leave.
- Your dog has recently experienced: a change in the family's schedule that results in his being left alone more often; a move to a new house; the death or loss of a family member; or a period at a shelter or kennel.

## Recommendations

Separation anxiety can be resolved using counter-conditioning and desensitization techniques. See a dog trainer for help with these issues.

## Other Solutions: Bark Collars

Bark collars are specially designed to deliver an aversive whenever your dog barks.

## Citronella Collar

This collar contains a reservoir of citronella solution that sprays into your dog's face every time he barks. A citronella collar is considered humane and can be up to 88% successful. One possible drawback is that the collar contains a microphone, so the aversive is delivered in response to the sound of the bark. Thus, other noises may set off the collar, causing your dog to be sprayed even if he hasn't barked. Some dogs can also tell when the citronella reservoir is empty and will resume barking.

## Aversive Sound Collar

This collar emits a high-frequency sound when your dog barks. Some are activated by the noise of the bark, while others are hand-held and activated by a handler. The rate of success for this type of collar is reportedly rather low.

## Electric Shock Collar

We don't recommend an electric shock collar to control your dog's barking. The electric shock is painful to your dog and many dogs will choose to endure the pain and continue barking. The success rate of this type of collar is less than 50%.



Fiona Percy

The main drawback of any bark collar is that it doesn't address the underlying cause of the barking. You may be able to eliminate the barking, but symptom substitution may occur and your dog may begin digging, escaping, or become destructive or even aggressive. The use of a bark collar must be in conjunction with behavior modification based on the reason for the barking, as outlined above. You should never use a bark collar on your dog if his barking is due to separation anxiety, fears or phobias, because punishment always makes fear and anxiety behaviours worse.

**Most importantly, have patience and be consistent.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact a CRD Animal Control Officer.



**Capital Regional District** | Animal Control  
212-2780 Veterans Memorial Parkway  
Victoria, BC V9B 3S6  
Tel: 250.478.0624  
www.crd.bc.ca

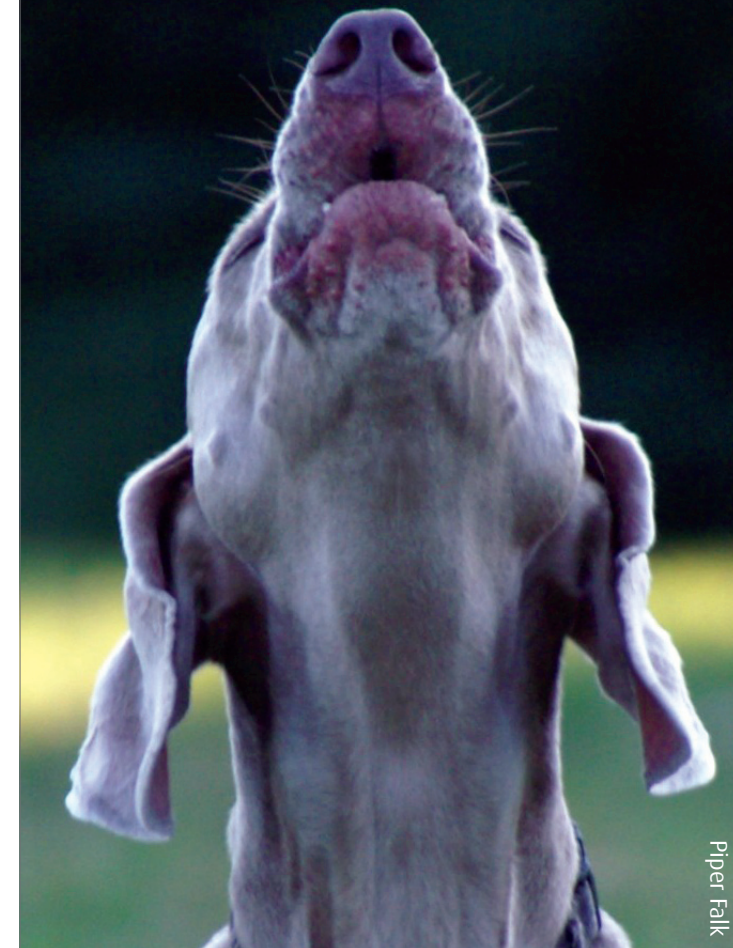
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# Bark! Bark! Bark!

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Piper Falk