

USING BARKING CORRECTION COLLARS

These should be used only after discussions with your veterinarian. There are many types available, some give the dog an electric shock, others produce a smell, which is offensive to the dog, and some collars produce an irritating ultrasonic sound. The use of these collars should only be used in conjunction with behaviour modification.

These collars must not be used on dogs with anxiety problems as they may well increase the dog's anxiety.

DE-BARKING

This is a surgical procedure that removes the vocal chords. De-barking will not result in a silent dog as the dog will still attempt to bark and the sound created may be more annoying than the bark itself.

De-barking will not cure the cause be it, fear, boredom or anxiety.

The Council's Animal Management Section does not favour this method.

PREVENTING NUISANCE BARKING IN PUPPIES

Preventing Nuisance Barking in Puppies: Teaching your young dog appropriate behaviour is easier than changing bad behaviour that has become a habit. Behaviour that we may consider as cute will not be cute when the dog is an adult.

When you bring the puppy home consider keeping the puppy in a crate in a room in your house for the first few nights until it becomes secure, this will build the puppy's trust in you and will also build a strong bond.

After a few nights slowly move the crate further away from you until you can put the puppy outside. At this point the crate should be exchanged for a kennel.

Training your puppy in simple obedience and relaxation methods will greatly reduce the likelihood of it becoming a problem barker. Introduce your puppy to situations that may cause anxiety later on. Get your puppy used to a busy street (on a lead of course) and expose it to noises produced by vacuum cleaners, hair dryers and other noises.

Puppy classes are a great place to socialise your young dog.

For further information on any of the issues described in this brochure, contact the Animal Management Section.

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Contractors working with the Whangarei and Kaipara District Councils
providing Animal, Noise, By-Law and Parking Management.

NUISANCE BARKING

Causes and Corrections



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CAUSES AND CORRECTIONS

All dogs bark, it is part of their natural communication and behavior. There are many reasons why dogs bark. Before we can attempt to reduce or eliminate any nuisance barking we must first understand what is causing our dog to bark.

This brochure is designed to help you identify what is causing your dog to bark and how we can reduce or control it.

ALERT OR WARNING BARKING

We generally encourage this as we want our dog to warn us of any danger i.e. intruder or a stranger. Dogs that bark at the postie, joggers or cyclists on the street will have their barking reinforced by the very action of these people leaving. The dog will think to himself "What a good job I have done making them go away" so the very action of these people leaving has reinforced the dog's behavior.

If we want the dog to act in this manner we must be able to command the dog to stop as soon as we are aware of the threat, if we ignore the barking until it annoys us the dog will learn that short barking will not gain attention but long extended barking will.

TREATMENT

We need to teach the dog to respond to a command or signal to stop barking, we do this by making a noise to distract the dog from barking. As soon as the dog stops you should give the command "enough" and immediately reward the dog either by praise or by giving a treat. **Do not** give the reward until the barking stops or the dog will think that it is being rewarded for barking and not for stopping the barking.

IMPORTANT

This method will not work if you are away from home, if you are away either put the dog inside or prevent the dog from seeing the intruders.

FEAR BARKING

This can start with alert type barking and then progress to fear barking as the stranger approaches. If your dog is barking out of fear you must stop it by making the dog focus on you and when the barking stops give a command and reward the dog when it is relaxed.

Over a period of time (days or weeks) have people approach the dog to a point where it remains relaxed and reward the dog. As people come closer have them reward the dog by feeding tit-bits.

ATTENTION SEEKING BARKING

Dogs soon learn that barking attracts our attention. A command of no is still attention, even though negative.

Stop the dog's barking by startling it, shaking a plastic soft drink bottle with a few stones in it or using any other noisemaker is an excellent way of startling the dog. When startled the dog will stop barking, at that point give the dog a substitute, a toy, bone or a walk etc. Make sure you do not give the dog the substitute unless the barking has stopped or the dog will think it is being rewarded for barking.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION BARKING

This type of barking is instinctive and difficult to control especially where there are multiple dogs. Often one of the dogs will instigate the barking and the other dogs will join in to identify themselves. Control this barking by using similar methods used for alert or warning barking, for example obedience and reward or substitute with a toy etc.

PLAY OR EXCITEMENT BARKING

If your dog barks excessively during play, it's best to let it calm down by slowing the game down or if the dog continues to bark stop playing until the dog settles down.

BOREDOM BARKING

Dogs who bark when bored can be similar to dogs seeking attention or those that are lonely. Bored dogs need something to do other than barking, we need to provide a much more stimulating environment. Exercising the dog(s) before leaving it is a must, a tired dog is far less likely to get bored.

Toys such as Kongs that can be filled with treats or a large bone will get your dog's brain as well as his body working.

LONELY OR ANXIOUS BARKING

Dogs who bark when they are left alone may be displaying a symptom known as separation anxiety. The more lonely the dog, the more upset it becomes and the more it barks. The more it barks the more upset it becomes and so on.

Firstly we must teach the dog simple obedience and how to relax as in alert or warning barking. Then we must spend time curing the dog's underlying anxiety behaviour.

This can be done by leaving the dog for a short time, or acting like we are leaving and before the dog starts getting nervous and barking we return (this may be just for a few seconds at first).

You must return before the dog starts to bark or we will reward the dog for barking instead of relaxation and silence. We then very gradually increase the time away from the dog ensuring we return before the dog becomes anxious.

We should consider changing our habits as these often indicate to the dog that we are leaving. For example picking up the car keys and putting on our shoes, vary this by not leaving, instead go and sit on the sofa. If you have the radio or lights on when you are home don't turn them off when you leave and don't make a fuss when you leave. Do not make a fuss when you return and don't punish the dog if it has caused damage, as you will only make it worse. Also if possible have a friend visit the dog during the day.

STARTLED BARKING

Use similar methods as used for alert or warning barking. If there is a particular noise that upsets the dog, record it and play it back to the dog at a very low volume, if the dog remains quiet reward it.

Over days or weeks gradually increase the volume until the dog is no longer startled into barking by the noise.

Abnormal Barking: The barking we have talked about up to now is mostly normal behaviour apart from separation anxiety. Dogs that bark at inappropriate things (a leaf falling) or barking in a very aggressive manner could fit into the pathological category should be referred to an animal behaviourist or veterinarian.