

City of
Cockburn



wetlands to waves

What's the Barking Deal

Dog owner barking information



www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/dogs

Managing dog barking

This booklet is designed to help dog owners manage nuisance barking, whether it's occurring within your own home or affecting neighbouring residents.

Barking is a normal and natural way for dogs to communicate. Dogs may bark for many reasons, including excitement, changes in their environment, boredom, anxiety, frustration, attention-seeking, play, pain or illness.

While barking itself isn't a problem, ongoing or excessive barking can affect your neighbours' enjoyment and peace at home, and may require action.



How barking can impact others

Persistent barking doesn't just create noise – it can affect how people live in and enjoy their homes.

It may:

- Disrupt sleep, rest and daily routines
- Make it difficult to relax or enjoy time indoors or in the backyard
- Cause stress, frustration or anxiety
- Lead to neighbours feeling on edge or worried about setting the dog off
- Reduce the sense of comfort and wellbeing in the community.



Understanding barking

This guide will help you understand why dogs bark and how to manage it effectively. It covers:

- Common reasons dogs bark and how to recognise different types of barking
- How to identify the underlying cause
- Practical, welfare-based strategies to reduce barking at its source
- Simple steps you can take to minimise the impact on neighbours
- The role of exercise, enrichment and environment
- When to seek professional support.

The aim is not to stop dogs from barking altogether, but to help you reduce excessive barking by meeting your dog's physical, mental and emotional needs.





Alert and territorial barking

Dogs may bark when they notice changes in their environment, such as people, vehicles, animals or unfamiliar sounds. This is known as alert barking.

While some alert barking is normal, frequent or ongoing alert barking can keep dogs in a heightened state of stress.

How to manage:

- Calmly acknowledge the alert to show your dog the situation is under control
- Call your dog away from the trigger and reward quiet, settled behaviour
- Reduce what your dog can see (e.g. fences, gates or front yards) using screening or barriers
- Provide a comfortable indoor resting area away from noise and activity
- Use background noise (such as a radio) to help reduce sensitivity to sounds.

Boredom-related barking

Dogs may bark repeatedly to keep themselves occupied or relieve frustration when they are bored. This can happen if they don't get enough physical exercise, mental enrichment or social interaction.

How to manage:

- Provide daily exercise suited to your dog's age, breed and health
- Include mental enrichment, such as food-dispensing toys or scent games
- Rotate toys and activities to keep them interesting
- Encourage regular rest and quiet time.



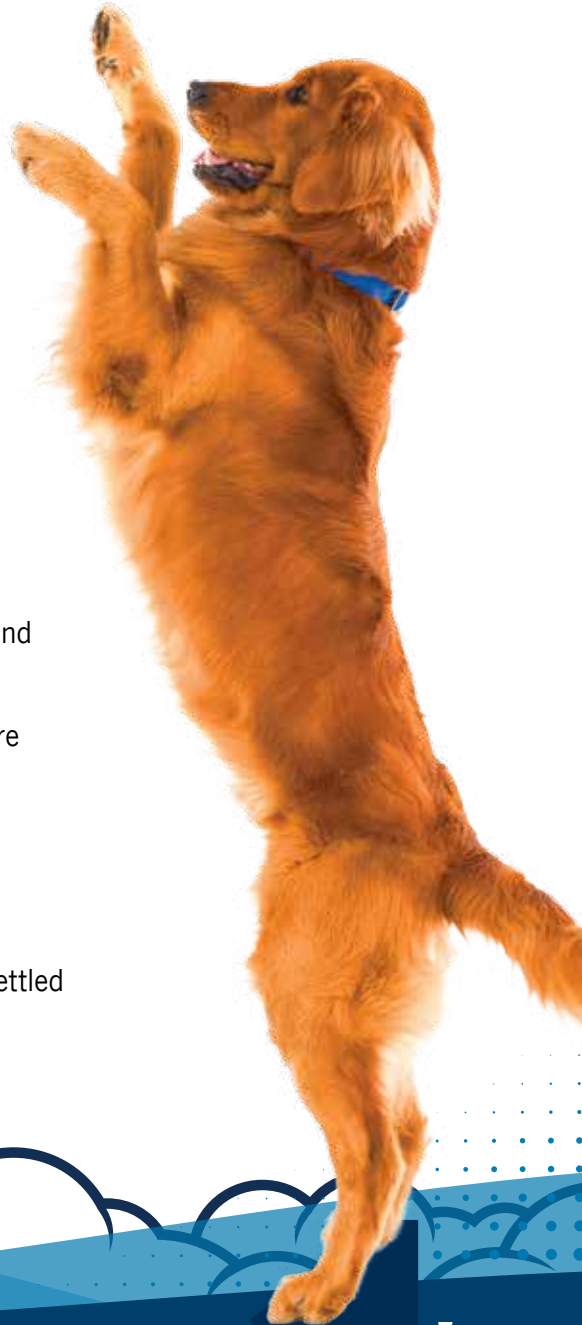
Attention-seeking barking

Dogs may bark to get attention from people or other animals. This can include wanting play, interaction or a response.

This behaviour is often reinforced without realising it – if barking leads to attention, dogs learn to keep doing it.

How to manage:

- Make sure your dog's exercise and enrichment needs are met first
- Respond early and calmly, before barking escalates
- Redirect your dog to a positive activity, such as training or enrichment
- Consistently reward calm and settled behaviour (and avoid rewarding barking with attention).



Separation and isolation distress

Dogs may bark when they feel anxious being left alone. This is known as separation or isolation distress, and is different from boredom. Barking often starts soon after the owner leaves and may be accompanied by pacing, drooling, destructive behaviour or difficulty settling.

How to manage:

- Gradually build your dog's comfort with being alone through short, controlled departures
- Provide a safe and comfortable indoor resting area
- Keep arrivals and departures calm to avoid increasing anxiety
- Seek support from a qualified dog trainer or behaviour professional if needed.





Health-related barking

Pain, illness, age-related conditions or cognitive decline can increase barking by reducing a dog's ability to cope with stress or discomfort.

This type of barking is often a sign that something may be wrong, particularly if it appears suddenly or alongside other changes in behaviour.

How to manage:

- Arrange a veterinary check-up if you notice sudden or unexplained changes in barking or behaviour
- Monitor your dog's overall wellbeing, including appetite, mobility and daily habits
- Adjust exercise, routine and environment to support your dog's age and physical abilities
- Ensure your dog's basic needs (including diet, comfort and enrichment) are being met.

Excitement and play barking

Barking during play or excitement is often normal, but it can become a nuisance if it is frequent or prolonged, particularly in multi-dog households.

How to manage:

- Provide structured play sessions with clear start and finish points
- Separate dogs if play becomes too intense or difficult to manage when unsupervised
- Redirect excitement into calm enrichment activities.





Exercise, enrichment and environmental management

Exercise and enrichment play an important role in reducing nuisance barking. Calm, sniff-based walks and mental stimulation help dogs relax and cope better when alone or in stimulating environments.

How to manage:

- Provide daily walks, regardless of property size
- Where possible, use multiple short walks rather than one long walk
- Offer enrichment activities when dogs are left alone (e.g. food puzzles or scent-based games)
- Reduce exposure to known barking triggers where practical (e.g. visual or noise stimuli).

Council process and owner responsibilities

The City of Cockburn investigates barking complaints in stages, starting with education and support.

Enforcement action is only considered where barking meets legislative thresholds and reasonable steps have not been taken to address the issue.

Dog owners are responsible for taking reasonable steps to manage barking and reduce its impact on the community.



City of Cockburn Ranger Services

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Ranger Services operate from 7.30am-6pm, 7 days a week.