

## **People talk, dogs bark.**

It is not reasonable to expect your dog to never utter a single bark; however, when barking becomes excessive it can create problems for the owners, the neighbors, and ultimately the dog. Dogs bark for a variety of reasons. The first step in correcting problem barking is to figure out why your dog is barking. If your dog is barking when you are not around, you may have to do some detective work like enlisting the help of the neighbors or even go as far as setting up a video camera to record when and why your dog is barking. As you take steps to fix the problem, keep your neighbors in the loop on your dog's progress.

Training a dog to control excessive or undesirable barking takes great commitment and perseverance on your part, but the benefits are great - including a good relationship with both your neighbors AND your dog!

### **Dogs bark for a number of reasons**

#### **1) Social Isolation/ Frustration/ Attention-Seeking Behavior**

Your dog may be barking out of boredom or loneliness if he's left alone for long periods of time without opportunities to interact with you, or if his environment is relatively barren, without companions or toys. Puppies, adolescents, and particularly active dogs need outlets for their high energy and become anxious if they are not occupied. □

**What you can do:** Make sure your dog has sufficient time with you and walk your dog at least twice daily (this is also great for bonding with your dog). Provide safe, interesting toys to keep your dog busy such as Kong-type toys filled with treats or busy-box toys. Rotating toys will keep them new and interesting to your dog.

#### **2) Territorial/ Protective Behavior**

Your dog may be barking to guard his territory if the barking occurs in the presence of 'intruders', which may include the mail carrier, children walking to school, and other dogs or neighbors in adjacent yards.

Is your dog's tail held high and are his ears up and forward? This type of posture indicates your dog is being territorial. Encouraging your dog to be responsive to people and noises outside will increase this behavior.

**What you can do:** Teach your dog a "quiet" command. When he begins to bark at a passerby, allow a few barks then say "quiet" and interrupt his barking by distracting him with a loud sound or a water bottle squirt in his mouth. When he's quiet, say "good quiet" and pop a tasty treat into his mouth. Remember, the loud noise is not meant as a punishment. Your goal is to distract him into being quiet so you can reward their quiet behavior.

Desensitize your dog to intruders by socializing him and introducing him to many different types of strangers. Reward quiet behavior and responses to a "sit" or "down" command with treats. Pay attention to your dog when he is quiet so that he comes to associate such behavior with attention and praise.

#### **3) Fear Behavior**

Your dog's barking may be a response to something he's afraid of if it occurs when he's exposed to loud noises (thunderstorms, firecrackers, construction noise). □ If your dog's ears are back, with his tail held low, this indicates a state of fear.

**What you can do:** Identify what is frightening your dog and desensitize him to it. This process may require professional help- consult a training/ behavior specialist for guidance during your dog's rehabilitation process.

Create a safe, comfortable space that block off access to outdoor views that might be causing a fear response, by closing curtains or doors to certain rooms. Avoid coddling your dog. He will interpret it as being rewarded for fearful behavior.

#### **4) Separation Anxiety Behavior**

Your dog may be barking due to separation anxiety if the barking occurs only when you're gone and starts as soon as, or shortly after, you leave or if your dog displays other behaviors that reflect a strong attachment to you, or an anxious reaction whenever you prepare to leave.

**What you can do:** Some cases of separation anxiety can be resolved using counter-conditioning and desensitization techniques. Successful treatment for some cases may also require the use of medication prescribed by your veterinarian.

Have your dog spayed or neutered to decrease territorial behavior and do NOT encourage your dog to bark at things he sees and hears outside.