

# Barking dogs

A guide for owners and neighbours



Basingstoke  
and Deane

**This leaflet provides information and advice on how to be a responsible dog owner and how to avoid difficulties with dogs barking excessively and causing a disturbance to neighbours. The council receives numerous domestic noise complaints each year and noise from barking dogs is one of the most common.**

## **The law**

Under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, noise, such as a dog barking from premises or land, may be considered a statutory nuisance. As such local authorities can take action to stop it. If after this action the noise continues, the dog owner(s) face the prospect of appearing before a magistrates' court, and could be fined up to £5,000.

Private individuals can also take their own action under the act by lodging a complaint with a magistrates' court.

## **Dogs at home**

Complaints about barking often arise because a dog is left at home alone for most of the day. Dogs will not usually bark when their owners are present, but will start barking when the owner leaves. Owners may therefore, be unaware of the problem until someone complains.

Dogs can sometimes resort to destructive behaviour, continuous barking or howling when there is no one around to stop them. It is better not to keep a dog at home, unless there is someone there to look after it. Dogs, by nature, are very sociable animals and regard their owners as their substitute family. Some dogs may become very distressed if left alone for long periods. Barking obviously has its advantages, for example, to deter potential intruders. However if barking is prolonged, this can become extremely tiresome and irritating to owners, neighbours, and anyone else within earshot.

## What can you do

Dogs should only be left alone for short periods. Dogs get used to a routine. Provided they have been well exercised before you go out they will often sleep until you come back. If you or a friend cannot exercise them regularly, you may wish to consider employing a dog walker. Ensuring your dog has toys can keep bored dogs amused while you are out. If you have to leave your dog outside make sure its kennel is not near a neighbour's fence or another place where it will be tempted to bark, for example, next to a street where people are passing.



It is also thought that leaving a radio on during the day will keep a dog occupied, particularly a station with more talking than music. Remember to put the volume at a reasonable level otherwise you may solve one nuisance but create another. Talk to your vet. Sometimes a dog will bark because it is ill or anxious. Your vet will check for any problems or may refer you to an animal behaviourist who can suggest ways to improve your dog's behaviour.

As a last resort anti-bark collars are an alternative solution. The collar is activated by the barking and releases a spray of lemon mist in front of the dog's nose. This is harmless to dogs and humans but is sufficient to distract the dog and stop it barking. These devices can quickly train a dog to stop barking. However you should consult your vet beforehand as some collars are considered unsuitable by the RSPCA.



## Useful contacts

Guidance documents 'Is your dog barking too much?', and 'Constant barking can be avoided' are available from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs by writing to: DEFRA, Customer Contact Unit, Eastbury House, 30 – 34 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TL or downloadable as pdf files from [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk).

For information on animal behaviour and training, contact the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC), PO Box 46 Worcester, WR8 9YS or see [www.apbc.org.uk](http://www.apbc.org.uk).

## How do I find out more?

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For further advice or information see [www.basingstoke.gov.uk/noise](http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/noise) email [ehteam@basingstoke.gov.uk](mailto:ehteam@basingstoke.gov.uk) or call **01256 844844**.

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