

Barking dogs



All dogs bark, but some barking dogs become a real neighbourhood nuisance - greatly reducing the quality of life for their neighbours and increasing neighbourhood tensions.

Barking dogs are one of the most common animal behaviour problems that council is asked to deal with. Ongoing barking is often a symptom of another problem, and taking time to understand what makes dogs bark is the first step towards solving this problem, for both the dog involved and your neighbours.

Why dogs bark

- Dogs are social animals and often bark when they are lonely.
- Separation from an owner can cause dogs to stress.
- Barking may also be the result of boredom and frustration.

- Barking is a dog's way of seeking attention from its owner.
- Dogs bark out of fear - this can be fear of people, objects or other dogs.
- Dogs bark when there is a threat to their territory.
- Playing with your dog often stimulates barking.
- Some dogs have a reputation for barking.

How to control barking

Barking can be controlled through several small behavioural changes.

- Small changes such as walking your dog twice a day may help to relieve boredom.
- Dogs are social animals and require a certain amount of interaction on a daily basis.

If your dog barks when you are away from the premises, it is probably due to loneliness. An easy way of combatting this is to provide your pet with stimulants such as balls and chew toys to keep them occupied while you are away.

- It can also be handy to leave a radio on and to leave something that belongs to you such as an old shoe.
- Give your dog a bone when you leave the house. This will help your dog remain positive when you leave, reducing its stress level.
- A fence that is correctly designed to restrict your dog's vision will help reduce barking.
- Obedience training and discipline are also very important when trying to stop a barking problem.

Neighbours

Talk to your neighbour about the problem; they may not be aware that their dog is barking or that it is bothering you.

If you are uncomfortable addressing the issue in person, council suggests writing a letter to your neighbour. You can also attach this factsheet for useful techniques on how to control barking. Give your neighbour time to address the issue.

If the barking persists, council will require you to complete a barking dog survey. Council requires documented evidence of nuisance instances to be collected before the issue can be escalated. This helps Local Laws Officers to identify the cause of the nuisance, allowing them to better assist owners when resolving the issue.

The barking dog survey must be formally lodged (it cannot be anonymous) as this documentation supports escalation action.

The survey is recorded by the complainant for a period of seven days and then must be returned within seven days of completion to council. This factsheet, a template letter to address the issue with your neighbour, and the barking dog survey are all available on the council's website by searching *barking dogs*.

What can council do

After a barking dog survey has been submitted to council, Regulatory Services will if necessary, survey adjoining neighbours to determine if others have similar concerns. This will allow us to judge the extent of the impact on the immediate community.

If the alleged nuisance is proven to be a breach of Mackay Regional Council Local Law No 2 (Animal Management) 2011, council may issue the owner with compliance notices and/or penalty infringement notices. The Local Laws database is available on council's website under 'Residents'.

The identity of the complainant will remain confidential in any correspondence from council.

The owner can dispute the complaint, as they have the right to have the matter heard before a Magistrate's Court. If this happens, the complainant(s) will be required to provide evidence in person.

A more detailed statement or affidavit may be requested, as council must be satisfied that sufficient evidence is available to support legal action.

Barking collar hire

Council hires anti-barking collars to residents with registered dogs for use as a barking deterrent. The collar is filled with citronella, and when the dog barks, the dog's breath moves over a sensor and a squirt of citronella is released. Dogs find the odour of citronella undesirable and the dog soon learns that barking causes a citronella smell.

Anti-barking collars are able to be hired from council's Client Service Centre in Mackay for a period of one week, however, extensions to this period can be arranged if required.

The fees for hiring a collar:

- Refundable deposit - \$83.20
- Cost to hire for a week - \$24.00
- Additional hire - \$24.00 for the second week - if the collar has not worked by this time, it is unlikely to be successful with further use.

Once the collar is returned in working order, the refundable deposit can be requested for reimbursement.

For more information visit the website mackay.qld.gov.au, phone council on 1300 MACKAY (1300 622 529), or email council@mackay.qld.gov.au.