



Barking dogs

A guide to effectively managing excessive dog barking.



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Introduction

Dogs are an important and loved part of our local community and can bring many positives to our lives. Barking is a natural form of communication for dogs; however excessive barking can cause a nuisance to neighbours and can even indicate underlying problems for the animal.

Baw Baw Shire Council receives numerous complaints each year regarding dogs that bark excessively and the negative impacts they can have on residents.

The dog's owner may not be aware that their dog is barking and causing a problem for other residents.

- The dog may only bark when the owner is not home.
- The owner may not hear the dog or perhaps not be bothered by the barking; some people are less affected by noise than others.
- The dog may only bark at night and the owner may be a sound sleeper.

If you have a problem with a neighbour's dog, or if your own dog is barking too much, this booklet contains information that may help.



Why do dogs bark?

Barking is a form of communication for dogs and is a natural behaviour. While it is expected that dogs will bark to express this, excessive barking can suggest a number of things:

- Boredom
- Loneliness
- To seek attention
- To alert or warn of something that be a threat
- Noises or movement outside the dog's property
- Fear (e.g. thunder, fireworks, or other loud noises)
- Medical issues (e.g. fleas, allergy, or illness)
- Hunger/thirst
- Inadequate space
- Provocation
- Changes in the home
- Inadequate shelter



Simple tips to reduce barking

The most important start to reducing a dogs barking is to identify why the dog barks.

If you are unable to identify the reasons for the dog barking, try some of these simple tips – every dog is different!

- Do not reward the dog when it barks. Don't let the dog inside or give it attention – instead, reward the dog when it is quiet.
- Teach the dog to stop barking on command – give the dog a command when it is barking and reward the dog for completing the command if it does not bark.
- If the dog is barking at passers-by or noises on the other side of the fence, block off these areas or put up screening to stop your dog from seeing this stimulus.
- Take your dog on more frequent walks. Even a short 10 minute walk a day is better for a dog than no walk at all.
- Provide your dog with things to do. Toys, bones or treats can be left for the dog when it is alone. Try to alternate what you give your dog, so it doesn't become bored.
- Take your dog to obedience training. Practice at home every day for a few minutes (or as long as your dog stays interested) – mental stimulation is just as important as physical exercise for a dog.
- Give your dog a safe space – some dogs bark because they are anxious or afraid. If possible, give your dog access to the house or the shed when not home so they have a safe space to retreat to.
- If possible, allow your dog access to an area inside during the day.





What can I do to address a barking dog?

Step one – Talk to your neighbour

Communicating with your neighbour can help to solve barking problems – the owner of a dog is not always aware that the barking is a problem. Neighbours can assist by identifying reasons for excessive barking and what is happening in the area when this occurs. Knowing the name of the dog and being familiar with it can also aid in reducing the barking to an extent.

Do not bang on the fence, yell at the dog or spray water at the dog as this only antagonises the animal and can make the problem worse.

Try the following suggestions to attempt to resolve the issue:

- Approach your neighbour and ask them if they are aware that their dog barks. State the situation clearly and politely.

- If it is not possible to approach your neighbour or you are not comfortable speaking with them, you can place a note or the 'Dear Neighbour' letter contained in this brochure into their letterbox.
- If your neighbour takes no action, you should complete all applicable sections in this booklet and submit a complaint to Council.

In most cases the issue can be resolved between neighbours by communicating. This should be attempted before lodging a complaint with Council, as your identity may become known if enforcement action is taken.

Step two – Write a letter

Overleaf is a simple letter template that may help to address the barking dog issue with your neighbour.

Date: / / .

Dear Neighbour,

You may not be aware, but your dog is currently causing a noise nuisance in the neighbourhood by barking excessively.

I have discussed this problem with Baw Baw Shire Council, who have suggested that, as a first step, I contact you to express my concern and attempt to rectify the situation first through communication, without lodging an official complaint.

Your dog appears to bark at the following times:

.....
.....

For the following reason/s:

.....
.....

Baw Baw Shire Council have provided some tips that may assist with excessive dog barking:

- Do not reward the dog when it barks. Don't let the dog inside or give it attention – instead, reward the dog when it is quiet.
- Teach the dog to stop barking on command – give the dog a command when it is barking and reward the dog for completing the command if it does not bark.
- If the dog is barking at passers-by or noises on the other side of the fence, block off these areas or put up screening to stop your dog from seeing this stimulus.
- Take your dog on more frequent walks. Even a short 10 minute walk a day is better for a dog than no walk at all.
- Provide your dog with things to do. Toys, bones or treats can be left for the dog when it is alone. Try to alternate what you give your dog, so it doesn't become bored.
- Take your dog to obedience training. Practice at home every day for a few minutes (or as long as your dog stays interested) – mental stimulation is just as important as physical exercise for a dog.
- Give your dog a safe space – some dogs bark because they are anxious or afraid. If possible, give your dog access to the house or the shed when not home so they have a safe space to retreat to.
- If possible, allow your dog access to an area inside during the day.

Your cooperation at this stage would be much appreciated.

Regards,

Your neighbour.

Step three – Create a noise log and submit a complaint to Council

If speaking with your neighbour and/or writing a letter has not resolved the issue, you may now lodge an official complaint with Council.

To lodge a formal complaint, you must:

- Identify the correct address of the barking dog;
- Download the 'Barking Dog Complaint Form' available on Council's website at www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/BarkingDogs or pick up a hard copy from a Customer Service Centre.

- Fill in the form by keeping a log of the noise for two weeks noting the date, time, duration of barking and reason the dog may be barking;
- Lodge an official complaint with Council by submitting the completed form.

If the above information and noise log is not provided to Council, no action can be taken.

How to complete the noise log

The noise log in the 'Barking Dog Complaint Form' must be detailed, accurate, honest. The noise log must be provided over a two-week period and be submitted to Council within one week (seven days) of completion. You must be willing to attest to its validity in court if required. This may seem excessive, but it is required for action by Council.

Overleaf is an example of a noise log.

Sample noise log

Date	Time barking started	Time barking stopped	Intermittent (I) Continuous (C)	Barking for how long? What type of barking? (Loud, howling, crying)	Reason for barking? (Weather, person walking past, another animal, construction etc)	Noise (How does the noise affect you?)
17/08/16	5:31am	5:35am	I	10 barks	Not sure	Woke me up
17/08/16	7:03am	7:38am	C	16+ barks	Owner left house	Frustrated
17/08/16	7:50am	7:53am	C	16+ barks	Cat on fence	N/A
17/08/16	---	---	---	---	---	I was at work between 8:30am and 2:30pm
17/08/16	3:00pm	3:01pm	C	4 barks	Person walking past	N/A
17/08/16	3:08pm	3:12pm	I	10 barks	Not sure	N/A
17/08/16	3:21pm	3:30pm	C	16+ barks	Kids in the street	Have to turn tv up
17/08/16	3:42pm	3:43pm	I	8 barks	Not sure	N/A
17/08/16	4:03pm	4:17pm	I	16+ barks	I was in my backyard	Frustrated
17/08/16	4:30pm	4:31pm	C	9 barks	Owner returned home	N/A
17/08/16	5:09pm	5:12pm	C	16+ barks	Not sure	N/A
17/08/16	5:17pm	6:20pm	I	16+ barks	Not sure	Eating dinner, nuisance
17/08/16	6:25pm	6:26pm	C	7 barks	Person walking past	N/A

The complaint form and noise log must be submitted to Council within 7 days of completion.



Once the log is completed, Council will:

- Assess the completed form and deem whether or not the noise is considered unreasonable;
- Advise the owner of the complaint and suggest possible solutions.

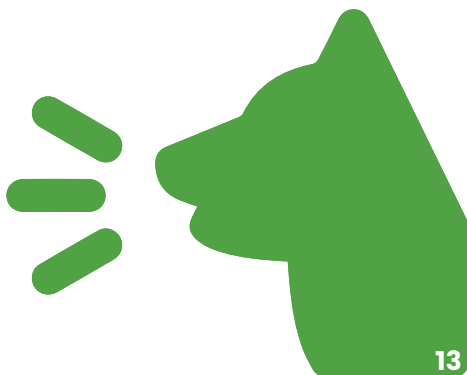
If the noise is deemed unreasonable, a Council officer will work with the neighbour to reduce the noise. Once an initial direction has been given to your neighbour, you will be asked to complete an additional noise log to monitor the noise for improvements.

Council cannot act if:

- The complaint and noise log have not been completed correctly;
- Council determines that the barking is not unreasonable. You will be advised of our findings.

Council will not get involved in neighbourhood disputes. You may choose to use the following for any civil action:

Disputes Settlement Centre of Victoria
4th floor, 456 Lonsdale Street,
Melbourne 3000
1300 372 888
dscv@justice.vic.gov.au



Court action – your responsibilities

Council can work within the guidelines outlined in the **Baw Baw Shire Council Community Local Law** with regard to neighbourhood noise complaints. The only way Council can facilitate an outcome when all other avenues have been exhausted is to present the case to the Magistrates Court.

If the matter proceeds to court, you will be required to give evidence to support the claim that the noise is unreasonable. This is why Council are unable to act without noise logs being completed.

A copy of the **Baw Baw Shire Council Community Local Law** is available on Council's website.





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