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### **Does Your Dog Have a Barking Problem? Ask Your Neighbor, They Will Tell You!**

Have you tossed and turned in bed at night because the sound of a barking dog is keeping you awake? How about the dog that barks off and on throughout the night? Just when things have quieted down and you have finally fallen asleep, you are jolted awake because your neighbor's dog has wound back up and started her barking, again. **Individuals who live next to a "barker" may find their nerves at the breaking point, especially if the dog barks around the clock.**

The yipping can grate on your nerves to the point where you are grinding your teeth and plotting ways to get rid of your neighbor's dog. Visions of a full nights sleep or a peaceful backyard cookout dance in your head, yet your daydreams are interrupted (yet again) when "Fluffy" decides it's time to start her barking back up. What can possibly be worse than this? Well, being the owner of this noisy canine is far worse.

Dog owners, who have a pooch that is constantly barking, are very much aware that their neighbors are upset. They are used to seeing their neighbors with bloodshot eyes and unfriendly expressions. Many of these dog owners may even have "run ins" with their neighbors over the annoying behavior of their dog. Others may have received citations or fines for being in breach of some noise ordinances in their town or neighborhood. What is a dog owner to do when they have a dog that has annoying (or down right disturbing) barking tendencies? They love their pet, yet they know their pet's barking is out of control. They also know their pet is tearing down their standing in the neighborhood.

The first step is to try to uncover the reason behind the continual barking. If you have had your dog for years and she has never displayed a tendency for barking before, you should have her evaluated at the vet's office. Older dogs may start barking if they are experiencing changes in their body. A dog that is suddenly losing her hearing or sight may be frightened. She may simply be trying to tell you that something is wrong with her. Older dogs who are experiencing arthritis--or other disease or disorder-- may also start barking.

Countless barkers are simply having separation anxiety. The signs of separation anxiety in a dog can include these symptoms:

- Your inside dog is your shadow. She follows you from room to room and doesn't seem to have "interests" that do not include you.
- Your inside or outside dog is aware when you are preparing to leave--and she becomes mournful or agitated. She may also do things for your attention and act excited in an attempt to get you to take her along.
- Your inside or outside dog barks nonstop when you are away. (You can have a neighbor monitor your dog's behavior or set up a video or tape recorder.)
- Your dog greets you with much enthusiasm, jumping . . . or even a weak bladder.
- Inside dogs do not like being placed outside and will stand at the door and bark to get back inside.
- Outside dogs will bark nonstop when you are away from home. They will also bark when you are indoors and they do not see you.

The last thing that dogs with separation anxiety need is punishment. They simply do not understand what they are being disciplined for. The best thing you can do is to teach your dog that she is going to be all-right while you are away. You can do this by going through the "motions" of leaving your home without actually doing so. This means you can put on your coat, gather your things, and pretend that you are leaving. Then don't. Repeat this, but next time go outside for a few minutes and then return. As you repeat this process, stay outside for a few minutes longer. This will gradually work up the amount of time your dog is alone and she realizes that she is going to be okay. You can also leave a special treat or chew toy behind to distract her from your leaving.

You can do this with an outside dog, too. Simply go outside like you are preparing to

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leave. Open your car door. Stand there a few minutes, then shut your car door and go back inside. Next time, go back outside and sit in your car for a few moments. Extend the amount of time you are in your car. You can work this up to driving down the block, then around the block twice, etc. You can have a neighbor or family member secretly monitor how long your dog stays quiet.

One of the important things to remember when you have a dog with separation anxiety barking is to make your arrivals and departures very low key. Do not overly greet them, or sadly tell them good-bye. This will only aggravate them. While some individuals would never dream of leaving home without telling their pets good-bye, it usually only upsets a dog with separation anxiety disorder.

Another thing you can do if you have an outside dog with separation anxiety is to evaluate if they are being socially neglected. Most dogs have a pack mentality, and they need to feel as if they belong. Make sure you are spending adequate time with your dog. Ensure that her area is full of toys and playthings that will keep her entertained while you are away. There are many families who found their dog quieted once they got her a playmate. If this does not help, there are anxiety medications which you can get from your vet. These will usually keep your dog calm and relaxed while you are away.

If your dog has been checked by a vet and she is healthy, and if you are certain your dog does not have separation anxiety . . . you may just have a dog with a major "quirk." After you try the many techniques to get your dog not to bark, you may have to try a new approach. This can include squirting them with a water hose/water bottle or placing a barking collar on them.

There are some pet owners who assume that all barking collars are "shock collars." This is not true. There is a bark collar which will squirt liquid on your dog when she barks. If you know your dog will hush when she is squirted with a hose, this collar can work for you while you are away, or at night. Check out the various barking collars on the market and find one you are comfortable with. But, keep in mind that there are some canines who will bark, despite the barking collar they are wearing.

As a last resort some dog owners (who find there is nothing to keep their dog from barking) will sometimes have their dog's "bark" removed. This concept is quite shocking to a dog owner who has never experienced the problem of having a severe barker in their family. However, this doesn't mean a dog will not be able to bark. This surgery just brings a dogs bark down to a quieter and softer level. It should be noted that many dogs which are in dog shelters are put to sleep on a regular basis because of their incessant barking. If your dog has a severe barking problem, this option is certainly preferred over euthanasia or moving to a secluded island.

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Author Ian White is founder of Pet-Sitters.biz. Pet-Sitters.biz specializes in helping pet sitters and pet owners connect to each other. Find and screen a sitter for your pet or advertise your pet care business.

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