



BARKING DOG MANAGEMENT GUIDE

The Nhulunbuy Corporations approach to resolving nuisance dog barking

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Nhulunbuy Corporation Limited

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A Guide for Quiet Communities

Introduction

The Nhulunbuy Corporation is dedicated to promoting a safe, harmonious, and cooperative community for all residents, including our four-legged friends. This comprehensive guide is designed to facilitate a respectful resolution for nuisance barking, providing key information for both the resident experiencing disruption (Complainant), and the pet owner whose dog may be causing the disturbance (Respondent).

This document outlines:

- Why dogs may bark excessively.
- Practical, humane solutions for managing these behaviours (for owners).
- The correct reporting procedures (for complainants).

Our primary aim is to facilitate a private, neighbour-to-neighbour solution before formal escalation is necessary. Responsible dog ownership and cooperative communication are key to a peaceful neighbourhood. By working together, we can ensure a better living environment for everyone.

Definitions

- **Nuisance:** Behaviour by an animal that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort, or convenience of any person in the community. This includes, but is not limited to, excessive barking by dogs and frequent crowing by roosters.
- **Persistent/Persistently:** Occurring continuously or repeatedly over an extended period, rather than isolated incidents.
- **Unreasonably Interferes:** Disturbs or disrupts a person's enjoyment of their property or the community in a manner that is not considered normal, acceptable, or justifiable under the circumstances, considering the impact on a reasonable person.

Problem animal behaviour

The Nhulunbuy Corporation classifies nuisance animal behaviour according to the Nhulunbuy (Animal Control) By-Laws 1998, These By-Laws define a nuisance animal behaviour as follows:

19A - Animal causing nuisance

(1) The owner of an animal must ensure that the animal is not a nuisance to people or other animals.

(2) An animal is a nuisance if the animal:

(a) - is injurious or dangerous to the health of the community or another person; or

(b) - behaves repeatedly in a manner contrary to the general interest of the community or specific interests of another person; or

(c) - creates a noise of a degree or extent that disturbs the reasonable mental, physical or social well-being of a person other than its owner; or

(d) - defecates to a degree or extent that causes annoyance to a person other than its owner.

Authorised Officers of the Nhulunbuy Corporation can issue Infringement notices to Individuals that are found to be in breach of these By-Laws.

Barking Dogs

A dog's barking is considered a nuisance when it persistently or continuously interferes with the peace, comfort, or convenience of residents. This is not about a dog barking once or twice when someone walks past, but rather a consistent and ongoing issue that affects a neighbour's quality of life. Examples include:

- Excessive barking for extended periods, particularly at night or early morning.
- Persistent barking that occurs multiple times throughout the day.
- Barking that is a result of a dog being left unattended for long periods.

Crowing Roosters

Roosters are classified as Livestock according to the Nhulunbuy (Animal Control) By-Laws 1998 and are prohibited on town lease, if you experience a problem with a crowing rooster in your area, please notify the Nhulunbuy Corporation.

Part 1: For the concerned resident (the complainant)

This section provides the essential context and procedures for initiating a friendly conversation and documenting the issue.

Step 1: Initiating a Neighbourly Notice

Before escalating to the Nhulunbuy Corporation, the complainant is required to notify the owner of the problem animal behaviour. This initial, friendly step is designed to encourage a neighbour-to-neighbour solution, as owners are often unaware their dog is barking when they are away.

This can be done verbally or via the “A Private & Neighbourly Notice Regarding Barking” print out located in our Barking Dogs Complain From, or a similar polite written note, and deliver it to the owner's property.

Step 2: Document the Issue (If the Problem Persists)

If the problem persists after about a two-week period after the initial notification, the complainant must begin to document the animal's behaviour before contacting the Animal Management Officer (AMO).

Keeping a detailed log helps the dog owner (if shared with them) identify patterns and helps the AMO substantiate claims if a formal investigation is required.

Required Details for the Log/Diary:

- Description
- Date and Time
- Duration
- Recordings
- Other notes

Using the Barking Dog Complaint Form will assist residents to record the correct information.

Step 3: Formal Complaint and Review of Documentation

If the problem persists after the two-week notification period and you have documented the incidents (Step 2), you can now lodge a formal complaint with the Nhulunbuy Corporation's Animal Management Officer (AMO) by completing the Barking Dog Complaint Form.

- **Submit Your Log:** Provide the AMO with the detailed log/diary of incidents compiled in the Barking Dog Complaint Form. This documentation is crucial for substantiating the complaint and moving forward with a formal investigation.
- **AMO Review:** The AMO will review the documentation to ensure the issue is ongoing, substantial, and meets the criteria for further intervention.

Step 4: Officer Intervention

Upon receipt of a formal complaint and sufficient documentation, the Animal Management Officer (AMO) will initiate a formal investigation.

- **Substantiation:** The AMO may take additional steps to independently substantiate the claims, which could involve site visits or other observation methods.
- **Owner Engagement:** The AMO will formally contact and interview the owner of the problem animal to discuss the issue, present the gathered evidence, and begin development of a corrective action plan tailored to the animal and the situation (e.g., training, changes in environment, management techniques).

- **Corrective Measures:** A progression of corrective measures will be introduced, outlining the steps the owner must take to resolve the nuisance behaviour.

Step 5: Resolution/Enforcement

The AMO will actively monitor the situation following the implementation of corrective measures to determine if the problem has been resolved.

- **Follow-Up:** The AMO will follow up with the complainant to check if the nuisance barking has ceased or been significantly reduced.
- **Compliance:** If the issue is resolved and the owner remains compliant with the corrective plan, the formal complaint process is concluded.
- **Enforcement Action:** If the problem continues despite the owner being made aware of the issue and being introduced to corrective measures, the AMO will consider taking formal enforcement actions. This may include:
 - Issuing **formal warnings**.
 - Issuing **infringement notices** (fines).
 - Seeking **court orders** to mandate compliance or further action regarding the animal.

Part 2: For the dog owner (the respondent)

This section provides actionable strategies to understand *why* your dog is barking and professional techniques to manage and correct the behaviour humanely.

The Owner's Responsibility

The Nhulunbuy (Animal Control) By-Laws 1998 state: The owner of an animal must ensure that the animal is not a nuisance to people or other animals. Authorised Officers can issue Infringement Notices for breaches of these By-Laws. Addressing excessive barking is a fundamental part of responsible pet ownership.

Understanding and Treating the Root Cause

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons and identifying the underlying cause is the first step toward effective management. Once you understand what triggers the barking, you can use behavioural modification techniques to address the issue.

A dog's bark is a form of communication!

The following table provides a brief description along with some basic techniques that might help resolve problem barking.

Cause of Barking	Description & common causes (Management)	Advanced Modification Technique
<i>Boredom/Frustration</i>	Dogs left alone with insufficient physical or mental stimulation often develop nuisance barking and destructive habits.	Enrichment & Exercise: Increase daily physical exercise. Replace passive entertainment (like simply being outside) with stimulating activities. Use puzzle toys, slow feeders, and hide treats around the yard (foraging) while you are away.
<i>Separation Anxiety</i>	This is not 'misbehaviour' but a genuine panic response when social animals are left alone. It often includes pacing, destruction (especially near exit points), and excessive vocalization.	Counter-Conditioning: Never make a fuss when leaving or returning. Gradually increase the time the dog is left alone. Provide a high-value, long-lasting chew toy <i>only</i> as you depart, removing it upon return. This pairs your absence with something positive, shifting the emotional state from panic to enjoyment.
<i>Territorial/Alert</i>	The dog barks at people, dogs, or traffic outside the property, believing they are successfully warning off intruders.	Management & Desensitization: Restrict the dog's view of the trigger (e.g., use window film, privacy screens on fences, or keep the dog in an area where they cannot see the street). Practice Desensitization by exposing the dog to the trigger (e.g., someone walking past) at a distance where they <i>do not</i> react, and immediately reward them with a high-value treat for remaining calm.
<i>Fear/Noise Phobia</i>	Barking triggered by loud noises (thunderstorms, fireworks, construction).	Safe Retreat: Provide a safe, den-like indoor space (a kennel or crate covered with a blanket) where the dog can retreat. Never scold a fearful dog. Use white noise or a fan to block external sounds. Consult a vet for anxiety medication if phobia is severe.
<i>Attention-Seeking</i>	The dog has learned that barking (even negative	Ignoring & Reinforcement: Completely ignore the barking: no eye

attention like scolding) will result in a reaction from the owner.

contact, no speaking, no touching. If possible, leave the room entirely. Return and reward the dog with praise and a treat *only* when they have been quiet for a few seconds. This teaches them that silence, not noise, gets them attention.

Key Behavioural Modification Techniques

These professional techniques are used by certified dog trainers and behaviourists to change a dog's emotional response to a trigger.

Desensitization and Counter-Conditioning (DS/CC)

DS/CC is the gold standard for treating fear, anxiety, and territorial barking.

Identify the Threshold: Determine the distance or intensity of the trigger (e.g., how close a passerby is) where your dog notices it but does not react (bark or lunge).

Conditioning: When the dog is below the threshold and notices the trigger, immediately give them a high-value reward (e.g., chicken, cheese). The goal is to change the dog's internal thought from "*Oh no, an intruder!*" to "*Hooray, a passerby means chicken!*"

Gradual Reduction: Over weeks, very gradually decrease the distance to the trigger, always ensuring the dog remains calm and focused on the reward.

Teaching the "Quiet" Command

Elicit a Bark: Ask your dog to bark (e.g., ring the doorbell or knock on a wall).

Give the Command: Say "Quiet" once the dog starts barking.

Reward Silence: When the dog stops barking (even for a split second), immediately give a treat.

Increase Duration: Gradually increase the time the dog must be silent before receiving the reward. This gives you a tool to interrupt unwanted barking.

Need Professional Help?

If you are struggling to manage your dog's barking, resources are available to help you. Consult with:

- Veterinarian, to rule out medical causes for barking, such as pain, hearing loss, or cognitive decline. They can also discuss anxiety medication options.

- Certified Professional Dog/Animal Trainer, for general obedience and applying training techniques.
- Certified Veterinary Behaviourist, for severe cases of separation anxiety or complex phobias.

Reporting & Complaint Procedure

The Nhulunbuy Corporation encourages residents to report problem animal behaviour through a structured, multi-step process designed to resolve issues effectively and amicably. If the neighbourly approach fails after a reasonable period, the complainant may proceed with formal reporting.

The Nhulunbuy Corporation encourages residents to report problem animal behaviour through a structured, multi-step process designed to resolve issues effectively and amicably, this can be achieved using this document and the Barking Dogs Complaint Form.

- **Step 1: Contact the Animal Management Officer**
Initiate the complaint and get guidance on the process.
- **Step 2: Notify the Animals Owner**
Encourage a neighbour-to-neighbour solution (in person or via a form).
- **Step 3: Document the Issue**
Keep a diary: date, time, duration, description, and recordings (if possible).
- **Step 4: Animal Management Officer Investigation**
Substantiate claims, interview the owner, and introduce a corrective action plan.
- **Step 5: Follow-Up & Resolution**
Actions include warnings, infringement notices, or court orders.

Need Help?

If you are struggling to manage your dog's barking, resources are available to help you. These include professional dog trainers, animal behaviourists, and veterinarians who can assist with training plans and address underlying health issues that may contribute to barking.

For more information on the Nhulunbuy Animal Control By-laws or to speak with an Animal Management Officer, please contact the Nhulunbuy Corporation. PH: 8939 2200