

Barking Dog Noise Complaint Procedure

The Nhulunbuy Corporation (NC) feels the most effective and successful way of managing a nuisance barking dog, is for the person affected by the issue (the complainant) to communicate their concerns directly with the dog owner. There is a chance the dog owner may not even be aware their dog is barking excessively and causing an issue for neighbours.

NC understands how a barking dog can negatively affect your way of life and the Nhulunbuy Animal Control By-laws allow the Corporation to act on this issue.



By-law - 39 Dogs causing nuisance

(1) An owner of a dog must ensure that the dog, either by itself or in concert with other dogs, is not a nuisance.

(1A) An owner of a dog commits an offence if the owner fails to comply with clause (1).

Maximum penalty: 20 penalty units.

(2) For this by-law, a dog is a nuisance if it is injurious or dangerous to the health of the community or an individual or behaves repeatedly in a manner contrary to the general interest of the community or an individual.

(3) Without limiting the generality of clause (2), a dog is a nuisance if it:

(a) creates a noise, by barking or otherwise, that persistently occurs or continues to a degree or extent that has a disturbing effect on the state of reasonable mental, physical or social well-being of a person.

(b) repeatedly barks when people or vehicles use a public place in the vicinity of the premises where the dog is kept; or

(c) repeatedly defecates in a place causing annoyance to a particular person.

Once you have decided the barking is excessive and disrupting your way of life, please consider the following options to manage the situation.

Options and things to consider.

1: Approach the dog owner as soon as the issue arises and state your case clearly and politely. They may not be aware of the issue.

- Explain that the problem has been worrying you and you would like to sort it out.
- Meet with your neighbour and explain the issue.
- Try to stay calm.
- Let your neighbour tell their side of the story.
- Give your neighbour a chance to give their views.

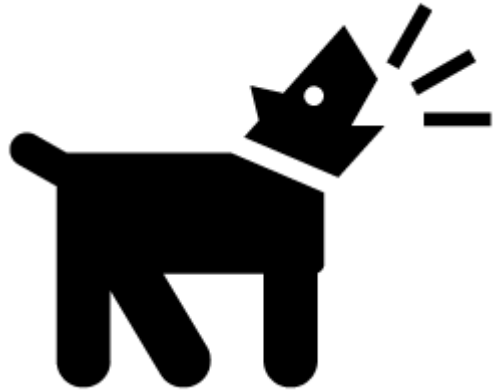
2: If the dog's owner is unapproachable, or you are not comfortable approaching the dog owner, the notification letter and the fact sheet 'Reasons why your dog barks excessively' which have been included below, can be placed in or under the dog owner's front door .

- Provide enough time for the dog owner to rectify the problem.

3: If the barking continues to be a problem after this period, you must provide written evidence to the NC for further action to be taken. The attached animal noise complaint form and barking diary sheet must be completed and returned to the Nhulunbuy Corporation.

The Corporation will then review the complaint and if necessary, approach the dog owner to discuss the By-law breach and try and assist with the problem. NC can also deploy a "Dog Silencer" device to deter the nuisance dog from excessive barking. NC can also pass the complaint on to the landlord of that address. Sudexo, DEAL and Territory Housing, all have very strict noise policies and can usually assist with these matters.

NC can and will enforce the Animal Control By-laws and issue infringements where necessary. If a dog continues to be a nuisance (By-law 39) after NC has issued warnings, infringements can be issued and if a dog owner receives three infringements of the same kind in any calendar year, the offending dog will be de-registered, sent off lease and possible conditions added to any future dog registration.



Dear dog owner,

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

Nhulunbuy Corporation suggests I contact you as the first step, to express my concern and allow you the opportunity to rectify the situation without recording an official complaint against your dog/s with the Corporation.

Attached is some information provided by the Nhulunbuy Corporation that could help you identify why your dog/s may be barking excessively and provides possible solutions for the excessive barking.

All that is needed at this stage is your cooperation to stop the excessive barking or move the dog away from town and avoid this matter progressing any further.

Regards,

Local resident

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons:

Once the underlying cause and 'triggers' for the barking are identified, training techniques can be used to treat the excessive barking in a humane way.

Boredom

Dogs that are left alone all day with nothing to do often resort to barking out of boredom. Boredom barkers will bark continuously and may also exercise their frustration on your gardens. To tackle boredom barking you should start by ensuring that your dog is receiving enough exercise. If you take your dog for a good walk in the morning, they will be more likely to rest until you come home. You should also make sure that your house and garden are sufficiently enriched with fun toys and puzzles to keep them entertained when you are not home. Hide their toys and some treats around the garden to encourage them to forage or if they like to dig provide a sand pit to divert their instincts away from your garden. If your dog has any play mates in the neighbourhood you might alleviate boredom by inviting them over for the day.

Being anxious when left alone

Dogs are social animals and it is normal for them to become anxious when they are left alone for the first time. Take care to teach your dog how to cope with being left alone at a young age. Begin by trying small amounts of time apart. For example, you could put your dog outside in the yard for short periods of time while you are still at home. Make sure they have toys to play and safe things to chew on while they are outside so the experience is a positive one.

Gradually extend the length of time you are leaving your dog alone. When you do leave the house make sure that they have somewhere safe to retreat to such as a kennel. Make sure that they receive plenty of exercise and that they have a supply of toys and safe chew toys/items to keep them entertained while you are away. Do not fuss over your dog when you come home – make sure both your departure and return are quiet and unexcited. If your dog suffers from separation anxiety you will need to manage the condition in consultation with a veterinarian.

Fear

Dogs can also bark due to fear. They may be afraid of people coming near their territory or fearful of noises, particularly at night which may stimulate

anxieties. Dogs can also be fearful of fireworks, thunderstorms and lawnmowers etc.

Territorial behaviour

It is natural for your dog to want to warn you about potential intruders. Your dog may not be able to distinguish between welcome visitors, people strolling past your home and intruders. Try and use predictable passers-by to change your dog's association from territory protection to a positive experience. Try and pre-empt the arrival of a friend and offer your dog a delicious treat or favourite toy. Only reward your dog when he/she is calm and not barking. With time your dog may begin to associate a person passing the house with something good rather than someone to protect you from.

If your dog barks at your neighbours when they are in their garden it is probably also because they are protecting your territory. Again, make sure you have some tasty treats at hand so that your dog associates your neighbours with the food (only give the treat when your dog is calm and not barking). You may also consider asking your friendly neighbours to treat your dog and supply them with their own stockpile – this is preferable to having them yell at your dog in frustration – yelling at a barking dog will only tend to reinforce the barking and protective behaviour. Barking is also reinforced when owners yell or scold their own barking dog and should be avoided. Successfully treating excessive barking relies on positive reinforcement – that is, reward good 'quiet' behaviour and avoid reinforcing 'unwanted' behaviour.

Attention-seeking behaviour

Dogs can bark when trying to call out to their human owner or when bored through being left alone for long periods of time or having nothing to do while its humans are at work/away from the home.

You can modify attention seeking barking by ignoring unwanted behaviour and rewarding good behaviour. When your dog barks for attention he should be completely ignored – avoid eye contact, even leave the room. Praise and pat your dog when he is calm and quiet so he realises that this is the behaviour required to secure your attention. You can also give your dog a food treat when he/she is calm and not barking. This rewards good behaviour and does not reinforce 'unwanted' behaviour.

Dog noise nuisance complaint



Complainant details: (Please note that incomplete complaints may not be investigated)

Name:

Residential Address:

Postal Address:

Home Number: _____ Mobile: _____

Work: _____

Note: Contact numbers which you provide may be used to update Nhulunbuy Corporation's records.

Complaint information:

Location of property where noise is occurring:

Number of animals at the property:

Details of the nuisance animal/s:

Breed: _____ Colour: _____

Size: _____

Breed: _____ Colour: _____

Size: _____

Breed: _____ Colour: _____

Size: _____

The Corporation Animal Control Officer is required to witness the noise nuisance. Can you suggest suitable days and times our officer may conduct assessments?:

How has the animal noise nuisance effected your quality of life?
