



A guide for owners and neighbours

Under nuisance legislation, noise nuisance that might be caused by excessive and unreasonable amounts of dog barking, howling or whining can be considered a statutory nuisance and we can take action to stop it.

Anyone allowing their dog(s) to bark regularly and for prolonged periods, risks being served with a noise abatement notice. If the problem continues beyond that, the person responsible may be prosecuted and could receive an unlimited fine.



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The law

Under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, noise, such as a dog barking from premises or land, may be considered a statutory nuisance. As such local authorities can take action to stop it. If after this action the noise continues, the dog owner(s) face the prospect of appearing before a magistrates' court and could be fined up to £5,000.

Private individuals can also take their own action under the act by lodging a complaint with a Magistrates' Court.

Dogs at home

Complaints about barking often arise because a dog is left at home alone for most of the day. Dogs will not usually bark when their owners are present but will start barking when the owner leaves. Owners may, therefore, be unaware of the problem until someone complains.

Dogs can sometimes resort to destructive behaviour, continuous barking or howling when there is no one around to stop them. It is better not to keep a dog at home, unless there is someone there to look after it. Dogs, by nature, are very sociable animals and regard their owners as their substitute

family. Some dogs may become very distressed if left alone for long periods. Barking obviously has its advantages, for example, to deter potential intruders. However, if barking is prolonged, this can become extremely tiresome and irritating to owners, neighbours, and anyone else within earshot.

Home alone – separation anxiety in dogs

(<https://www.bluecross.org.uk/advice/dog/home-alone-separation-anxiety-in-dogs>)

What can you do

Dogs should only be left alone for short periods. Dogs get used to a routine. Provided they have been well exercised before you go out, they will often sleep until you come back. If you or a friend cannot exercise them regularly, you may wish to consider employing a dog walker. Ensuring your dog has toys can keep bored dogs amused while you are out. If you have to leave your dog outside make sure its kennel is not near a neighbour's fence or another place where it will be tempted to bark, for example, next to a street where people are passing.

It is also thought that leaving a radio on during the day will keep a dog occupied, particularly a station with more talking than music. Remember to put the volume at a reasonable level otherwise you may solve one nuisance but create another. Talk to your vet. Sometimes a dog will bark because it is ill or anxious. Your vet will check for any problems or may refer you to an animal behaviourist who can suggest ways to improve your dog's behaviour.

As a last resort anti-bark collars are an alternative solution. The collar is activated by the barking and releases a spray of lemon mist in front of the dog's nose. This is harmless to dogs and humans but is sufficient to distract the dog and stop it barking.

These devices can quickly train a dog to stop barking. However, you should consult your vet beforehand as some collars are considered unsuitable by the RSPCA.

Barking dogs - what can I do?

(<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/behaviour/barking>)

Controlling your dog in public (<https://www.gov.uk/control-dog-public>)

The Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (<https://www.apbc.org.uk/>)

Pet welfare education (<https://www.bluecross.org.uk/>)

Contact details

Environmental Health team

If you have an enquiry, [send a message to the Environmental Health team](#)

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