

# BARKING PROBLEMS

By Terena and Nancy Thomas



Lost sleep, angry neighbors, irritated owners, and sometimes even court fines can all be generated by a zealous barker. Shock collars, taping the dog's mouth shut, hitting and yelling are all cruel and ineffective punishments. If the owner does not have the inclination to train the dog, but must do something, a more humane alternative is to have the veterinarian debark the dog. Horrible as that sounds at least the poor frustrated dog can still go through the motions of barking to release his frustration. Subjecting a dog to the scalpel to cure a simple behavior problem is incredibly drastic! It is certainly easier to spend some time to train your pet!

Yes, there is a solution to your problem! Over-barkers can be trained to be quiet! We do not want to eliminate his means of communication by forbidding barking. Barking is as normal as tail wagging! Several warning barks are expected when the need is indicated. Noise pollution must definitely be stopped.

Environment and heredity both have a great influence on the amount of noise your dog can create. Heredity can not be changed but environment can! Training begins with bringing your noise maker inside. There are less targets to cause your racket raiser to start up, and it is quieter for the neighbors instantly. If your dog was sentenced outside to solitary confinement for other behavior problems it is now time to solve those as well! Until your noise issue is solved the dog must be kept indoors, especially at night! Close the drapes to muffle some of the outside noises. A radio with calm music can also mask incoming sounds. Following are specific causes and cures for this problem. They work! All you have to do is DO IT!

A dominant dog will use his voice to get the dominated owner to open doors so the dog may go out or come in, eat, be petted, or go for a walk. The roles here are reversed. The dog "speaks" and the owner obeys! A dog that thinks he is the leader of your pack (your family) must quickly learn he is not! Begin strict obedience training promptly. STOP obeying his demands now!

Trained barkers are created by misguided owners. When the dog makes any sound the owner gently holds the dog or the dog's muzzle and softly says "Sh, sh, now be a good dog, everything is okay." Some of these owners even go so far as to hug and stroke the dog or even offer a treat! All of this is perceived by the dog as reward!! Even the dumbest dog swiftly learns every time it makes a sound it will be held (rewarded) and the owner will make loving sounds (praise). He will repeat the performance for more! Voila! The owner has created a nonstop noise maker! Use the techniques detailed in the paragraphs

on overprotected barkers or outside barkers to retrain this misled chatterbox.

**Loneliness** results from being left alone for hours on end. This is the most frequent cause of barking problems. In an effort to relieve the heartache of feeling abandoned, a dog will often release his tension by barking and howling. Barking is sometimes used by the lonely dog as a plea for attention. They actually beg someone to at least come out and yell at them! Having someone come out and “bark” at them is better than not coming out at all. This dog needs to be brought into the family circle to relieve the pain of feeling unloved. He should sleep in his master’s room at night off of the bed. Play with him, brush him, pet and love him. Ease his suffering and the racket will stop. If he must be left for short periods give him a toy or bone to play with and use the radio therapy to ease the isolation.

**Stress** of the owner’s departure or return causes many dogs to sound-off. ALWAYS leave and enter CALMLY! Emotional greetings or farewells stress the dog and a keyed-up canine usually tells us all about it! Often it is much more than we want to hear!

**Over protective barkers** are responding to what they perceive as threats. Other dogs, kids, trash men, mailmen, door bells, etc. can all push the guard-dog into a barking spree. The dog is the most sophisticated intruder alert system available! It’s the “alert system” that won’t shut off that needs the following training. First teach your sentinel to come when called. The next time he barks a warning, call him and have him down and stay. Recheck the area. Then have him down stay for 10 minutes before releasing him with lots of praise. This will teach your protector that you want several barks to alert you to danger. After the alert he is to come to get you to take over. He will soon learn his job is done once he lets you know there is a threat.

**Lack of exercise** can help create an excessive uproar. Play ball, jog, or go for brisk walks with your talkative comrade. This will help to use that extra energy on something healthy for both of you! Obedience training is an important part in the treatment of any behavior problem. In addition to providing mental and physical exercise the dog and owner learn communication.

**Outdoor barkers** are a special annoyance. To solve this problem construct a “distracter” of cans, chains, bells, bolts, washers, etc. (or buy a buzzer). Hang it near your dog’s favorite barking spot. String it over a branch, cloths line, tall fence or porch roof and through a window (yours or a neighbor’s). Every time your dog makes a commotion command him to “HUSH”. Then the string to the device should be yanked quickly several times by you or a helpful neighbor if you are absent. The loud clatter or buzzer should first startle the dog into being quiet. **He must be praised while he is silent.** At first praise immediately the second he shuts up. Then wait 5 seconds, 10, 15, 20, and so on before praising and rewarding. Within a single session it is possible to get the barker to stay quiet for up to two minutes. The key to the effectiveness of this method is that following the command to “Hush!” the owner must devote absolute attention to the student until the allotted time is over. At the two minute point you are well on your way to having the noise problem solved!

If the pupil should make a sound before the set time is up a squirt-gun or spray bottle set on “stream” works wonders! The water must be sprayed in the dogs face during a bark or within 1/2 second after words. NO LATER! Never shoot while he is quiet!! Restart the count as soon as he is silent. Praise and reward when the time is up. Only allow your

barker outside for a maximum of 20 minutes, and only when he can be watched.

Confinement may require a different solution as the restricted one demands release. If your dog has been in a crate, kennel, or dog run for only a short time, and is demanding to be let out, he must stop. Use a command to “HUSH!” followed by a swiftly delivered cup of water in the face. This needs to be repeated so have more ammunition ready in a pitcher. When the dog is quiet, praise and reward. See the sections on exercise and loneliness.

To embark on your training when it is convenient for you sometimes requires an assistant. Enlist a friend to rattle trash cans, walk their dog, ring your chimes or whatever sets your bowser on a bout of barking. This is the time to load your weapons (squirt gun in one pocket, treats in the other) and train your four-legged friend. Remember every time your nightingale is noiseless commend him for it!!

In the event that none of the above mentioned techniques work the Canine Country School offers a unique, humane alternative to putting your pup down or moving away from complaining neighbors. The Anti- Barking System (ABS) is a bark collar that uses citronella to quiet the dog rather than shock or high pitched noises like the other types of collars utilize. It has a 85% success rate and is not harmful to your pet in any way. Call us to set up an appointment or to discuss further options.

Terena Thomas, CPDT  
Head Trainer  
PO Box 202712  
Denver, CO 80220  
Phone: 970-524-TRAIN (8724)  
[www.caninecountryschool.com](http://www.caninecountryschool.com)  
[info@caninecountryschool.com](mailto:info@caninecountryschool.com)