

Barking dogs

A guide for neighbours.

Why dogs bark

Barking is a normal behaviour for dogs, after all, it's one of the key ways that dogs communicate with each other and with the people around them.

Whilst barking is a natural behavior, it may be an issue if it occurs:

- too frequently
- at inappropriate times of the day or night
- for extended periods of time.

Normal barking

Normal barking can occur in the following situations:

- play
- herding
- hunting
- frustration
- lack of stimulation and enrichment
- learnt behaviour
- attention seeking
- lack of training or inappropriate training.

Barking can often be resolved by training or re-training the dog.

Talk to the dog owner

If you're concerned about the amount of barking coming from a neighbouring property, we encourage you to take steps to work through the issue with the dog owner.

At times, dog owners are not aware that their dog is barking. A friendly approach may help the owner address their dog's barking quickly and avoid an unnecessary dispute.

Use one of our postcards

If you don't feel comfortable approaching the dog owner in person, you can use one of our 'dear dog owner' postcards available at the back of this guide.

Make a report

If contact with the dog owner is unsuccessful or the owner has been unable or unwilling to address their dog's behaviour, you can contact our Community Rangers on 8384 0666 to discuss your concerns and make a report.

On the following pages we've outlined the steps that are taken if you make a report about a neighbour's dog.

Making a report

1 Contact council

If you've been unable to reach a resolution with your neighbour, it may be time to discuss your concerns with our Community Rangers.

Phone 8384 0666 or email
mail@onkaparinga.sa.gov.au

2 Gather information

On receipt of a report about a dog that is causing a barking nuisance we gather information to understand the dog's behaviour, why the dog is barking, how often, when and for how long.

This may involve:

- meeting with you and assessing the situation at your property
- recording the dog barking
- speaking with or visiting other neighbours to gather additional information.

Estimated time: about 7 days.

3 Dog owner notified

If it is determined that there is a case of excessive barking, the dog owner will be notified of the report and provided with suggestions to resolve their dog's barking based on the most likely cause.

Information and tools are provided to the dog owner to support behaviour change or confirm the cause and extent of the barking.

4 Monitor behaviour change

We will seek weekly feedback from you and share this with the dog owner. For example:

- Has the barking reduced, increased or stayed the same?
- What is the dog owner doing that is and is not working?

The monitoring stage may be extended to allow for continuous improvement of the dog's behaviour to be recognised.

Estimated time: 3–5 weeks

5 No improvement

If the dog owner is unable or unwilling to address their dog's nuisance behaviour and there is evidence of persistent nuisance, we may issue a Control (Barking Dog) Order to the owner. See page 3 for information about control orders.

If we proceed to issuing a control order, supporting evidence will be required to prove persistent unreasonable barking and its impact on neighbours. See page 3 for information about documenting evidence.

Before a control order can be served, we must give the dog owner prior notice and consider any information they provide.

Estimated time: 2–4 weeks

6 If a control order is served

When a dog owner has been served a control order and been directed to engage a dog behaviourist, we will check that this action has been taken.

Estimated time: Completing mandated training may take 1–2 months.

7 If barking continues after a control order is in place

If unreasonable barking continues after a control order has been served, further evidence of the breach will be required. This will include the duration and frequency of the barking, and what impact it is having on neighbours.

If the dog owner fails to meet the requirements of the control order:

- an expiation notice may be issued for breaching the control order; and/or
- prosecution may be initiated through the Magistrates Court which can lead to strict controls being imposed on the dog.

Estimated time: Briefing a matter before the court for prosecution or court ordered directions may take 12–18 months.

8 Resolution

The issue is resolved once persistent barking has been addressed and the barking no longer persistently interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of a person.

Once the barking issue is resolved, a letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the dog owner and neighbours, and the report will be closed.

If nuisance barking recommences we may re-open the report, starting at the relevant stage.

What is a control order?

- A control order is a legally-enforceable way in which a council can place restrictions and/or requirements on the owner of a dog.
- A control order requires the dog owner to take all reasonable steps to reduce the nuisance barking. This may include undertaking specific training courses or to seek professional assistance to address the dog's barking.

Documenting evidence

If we proceed to issuing a Control (Barking Dog) Order, supporting evidence will be required to prove persistent unreasonable barking and its impact on neighbours.

This evidence can be in the form of:

- a diary with date, time and duration of barking recorded
- audio or video recordings
- an impact statement; or
- a combination of all of the above.

For guidance on how to best document the barking and its impacts, go to onkaparingacity.com/barkingdogs

Alternative solutions

Legal action

The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 provides the legislative framework from which civil action can be taken against a dog owner. Any person can take civil action; however this course of action can only be initiated by the complainant.

The City of Onkaparinga cannot take civil action against a dog owner, on your behalf.

For more information contact the Dog and Cat Management Board on 8124 4962 or visit www.dogandcatboard.com.au

Mediation

Mediation can help to resolve conflict and disputes at an early stage, with a view to avoiding the expense and stress of drawn-out legal proceedings. Contact Uniting Communities Mediation Service on 8342 1800 or visit www.unitingcommunities.org/mediation

Dear dog owner postcard

Print the postcard on the next page, fill it in and pop it into your neighbour's letterbox.

If you'd like a hard copy of the postcard please phone 8384 0666.



Hello

Dear neighbour / dog owner

Please accept this card as a neighbourly message to let you know that I'm concerned about your dog due to the amount of:

- barking howling crying/whining growling

This mainly occurs

- nights weekdays weekends when you're not home

Any other comments:

Please return this card to:

Name

Address

If you would like to provide any further feedback, please phone me on: