

## **Barking Dogs**

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It's Spring time, the weather is warm, and those wonderful sounds of nature are with us again – the wind gently blowing through the trees, birds singing their melodious songs, bees buzzing in the flowers and dogs barking at all hours of the day and night. The barking of dogs is one sound that most of us can do without. Of course, dogs don't just bark, they make other sounds that can irritate us such as howling, yelping, growling and whining. As the Spring weather gets better, dogs will be outside more and there will be more things and people to trigger the vocalizing.

Dogs vocalize for a variety of reasons. We need to understand that barking and making these other sounds is normal behavior and is what dogs do. They may bark excitedly seeing children walking near their house, or they may howl in response to other dogs they hear howling, or they may growl and bark threatening other dogs or people that come near the house, or they may howl in fear of storms or being left alone. Despite what we may think, they don't bark for the fun of it or just to irritate us.

What can be done to stop obnoxiously vocalizing dogs? If it's a neighbor's dog, perhaps you need to have a friendly conversation with them to let them know of the problem. Some owners honestly don't know their dog is a problem barker. If talking to the neighbor doesn't help, you can call your local animal control agency. Most communities have ordinances about nuisance barking. If the problem barker is your dog, you will need some knowledge of what causes the barking in order to effectively control it. If the dog is barking in response to exciting things or situations, like people walking by the house or things the dog hears, sometimes you can remove the dog from the source of the exciting things by keeping the dog in the house or in a well-ventilated garage or restricting him to a part of the yard where he can't see or hear the exciting things. Electronic anti-bark collars can also be effective in stopping excitement barking. For dogs that are vocalizing out of fear of things or being left alone, bark collars won't work and restriction may not help. The best way to stop the vocalizing is to get help from your veterinarian or a behaviorist to reduce the dog's fears. Muzzling the dog is not an appropriate way to stop barking and can result in injury or death.