

Greetings from Central Utah Wag-N-Train Dog Rescue and Training. Here is our monthly Training Tips E-Newsletter.

We receive a lot of calls from distressed and frustrated dog owners wanting us to find their dog a new home. Although these dog owners come with various complaints, one of the most common we hear is that their dog barks too much and their neighbors are angry and they've had it. Nuisance barking can be one of the most frustrating of behaviors for dog owners which is ironic considering that barking as an alarm must have been one of the main reasons we domesticated dogs in the first place, and one of the reasons we live with dogs today. Barking in certain circumstances is very desirable. I read a study once the involved interviewing prison inmates who were incarcerated for crimes such as burglary and kidnaping. All of those prisoners that were interviewed agreed that if a home had a dog they moved on to find another victim. The study didn't even specify a *Abig@dog* or a *Amean@ dog*. It was just a dog and they would move on. That's a pretty cool benefit to being a dog owner.

If your dog only barks just a few times to alert to visitors or an occasional vocalization throughout the day, then you do not have a problem. However, if your dog barks incessantly for no reason and does not stop with an *AO.K. that-s enough@* or other command, you'll want to teach your dog some *Abark control@*. In order to determine the training approach you take, you'll want to first figure out why your dog is barking.

Andrea Arden, Pet Expert for the Today Show, Regis and Kelly and The View, has broken down the types of barkers into 4 categories: The Attention-Seeking Barker, The Owner-Absent Barker, The Alarm Barker, and The Yard Barker.

The Attention-Seeking Barker is barking to seek your attention. Simply teach him it will have the opposite effect. One thing we notice time and again at Wag-N-Train is that when a dog starts in with it's nuisance barking, the owner will begin stroking and petting their dog (if it's a little dog they'll often pick it up) and they'll talk soft and say things like *It's O.K. honey, stop barking, shush, it's O.K.@* They don't realize that what they are doing is actually encouraging the dog to continue to bark. This dog thinks, *Agee, when I bark I get nice rubs, and my person talks nice to me...I loooooovvvvee this! I'm going to keep this up...this is GREAT!@*. Ignore, means just that **B ignore**. When the dog stops barking, then give it attention and don't be afraid to talk to your dog. *AYou are such a good girl when you are quiet....thank you for not barking@*. If she starts barking again, then turn your back and ignore. Be consistent! It won't take long for the Attention Seeking Barker to realize that the only time she gets your attention is when she is quiet.

The Owner-Absent Barker If your dog barks because he is bored and stressed when left at home alone, you should teach your dog to tolerate and even enjoy your absences. Start by teaching your dog to enjoy quiet moments by himself while you are home, so he may do so more confidently when you are not. Providing safe chew-toys for your dog to occupy his time is a great resource (ie. Kongs stuffed with peanut butter, kibble and cheese--place it in the freezer then give it to your pup for hours of enjoyment <http://www.kongcompany.com/how2use.html>)

A Note About Separation Anxiety: Some dogs bark when left alone because they suffer from separation anxiety B a serious behavioral disorder where the dog becomes quite fearful, anxious and upset B even destructive B when the owner leaves. In dogs with separation anxiety, barking is just a symptom of a deeper problem that must be addressed. If you think your dog fits this description, or has been diagnosed by an animal behaviorist or veterinarian, we recommend dedicated one-on-one training with a professional dog trainer who has experience in this area. Call Wag-N-Train at (435) 851-DOGS for reasonably priced one-on-one assistance with our professional trainer.

***The Alarm Barker** is a dog that barks when the door bell rings or someone knocks on the door, or someone is approaching your house, etc. but the dog does not settle down and continues to bark...thus the problem. By teaching your dog to bark and shush on cue, you'll have an on/off switch® that is useful in these situations. Enlist the help of some friends and practice asking your dog to A**speak**® and A**Shush**® [or A**quiet**® or whatever command word you want to use...just be consistent and always use the same word]*

Have some of your dog's most favorite treats on hand and then ask your dog to "speak", instruct your visitors to knock on the door when they hear you say this, and reward your dog by saying "thank you" or "good dog" when he barks. Your dog may look a bit shocked for a moment B after all, he is probably used to you yelling at him when he barks! In the beginning of this training session, he will be barking at the cue of the knock on the door. However, after a number of repetitions of putting the word "speak" before the cue of the door knock, your dog will make the association and recognize the word as a cue to bark as well.

Now, to get him to shush, have your friends knock on the door, say "shush", and wiggle your dog's most favorite tasty treat in front of his nose. Once he sniffs the food he will shush. Now give him the treat as a reward. Repeat this many times and your dog will realize how much fun it is to speak on request B and how it is even more rewarding to shush on request!

***The Yard Barker** is one of the most common complaints of suburban residents.*

Typically, a dog left outside will alert to the unlimited supply of visual and auditory stimuli. Each noise and person or animal passing by is likely to get your dog into a barking frenzy. Which is not likely to help you to make friends with your neighbors! Leaving your dog alone in the yard may also encourage him to indulge in other activities you will find inappropriate, i.e. digging or escaping. More importantly, he is vulnerable to a number of dangers, such as being stolen, poisoned, or hurt by an animal that comes into the yard. Dogs are usually relegated to the yard because they are not housetrained. If that is the case, housetrain him and bring him into your home! When your dog is going to be outside for longer periods, giving your dog a few well-stuffed chewtoys is the easiest and most effective solution. (ie. Kongs stuffed with peanut butter, kibble and cheese--place it in the freezer then give it to your pup for hours of enjoyment <http://www.kongcompany.com/how2use.html>) This way he has something to think about other than barking. A well-stuffed chewtoy will keep your dog busy for an hour or more (this means no time for barking). In fact, put his food bowl away and only feed him from his chewtoys and that will motivate him to concentrate on the Kong and not on barking.

Over the years, many approaches have been developed to control nuisance barking. From behavior training, to the drastic vocal chord surgery and shock collars. Not all techniques will work with your dog and if you are considering shock collars or vocal cord surgery please reconsider. We cannot recommend these techniques as they border on cruelty and we feel they are inhumane and unnecessary in light of other options available.

By now you've probably placed your barker into at least one of the above categories and hopefully the solutions offered will help.

If you would like one-on-one assistance with your dog training issues call Wag-N-Train Dog Rescue and Training at (435) 851-DOGS or email us at

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