



# CALISTOGA POLICE DEPARTMENT

---

1235 WASHINGTON ST. CALISTOGA, CA 94515 • (707)-942-2810

Date:

RE: Barking Dog Complaint

Dear Dog Owner,

Unfortunately, it has come to our attention that your dog is causing a nuisance by barking or howling at certain times.

We are unsure if you are aware of this problem. Therefore, we would like to assist you initially in seeking information on ways to deal with this matter.

We would appreciate that you take action as soon as possible to ease the situation.

We have given you this option rather than the City making a formal complaint to the District Attorney's Office.

Enclosed is a copy of the Calistoga Municipal Codes, Section 6.04.185, Prohibited Conduct and Section 8.20.101, Persistent Noise – Declared Nuisance – Abatement.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Please contact us at 707-942-2810 if we can be of further assistance.

---

Responding Police Officer and ID#

**6.04.185 Prohibited conduct.**

---

A. No owner or possessor of any animal shall cause or permit it to do any of the following:

1. To trespass upon any private property without the consent of the owner thereof, and to knowingly permit the animal to remain upon the property or to habitually continue to trespass thereon.
2. To suffer or permit such animal to habitually bark or meow or act in such a manner as to continuously disturb the peace of any citizen or to be a public nuisance.
3. To be without proper and adequate food, water, shelter, care, and attention as described in Section 597(f) of the Penal Code.

B. No person shall leave a dog or other animal in any unattended motor vehicle without adequate ventilation, sanitary conditions, or in such a manner as to subject the animal to extreme temperatures which may adversely affect the animal's health or safety.

1. Any Animal Control Officer or Law Enforcement Officer who witnesses a violation of this section shall have the right to impound the animal if, in the Officer's opinion, the animal's health or safety is or will be thereby endangered.

C. No person shall interfere with, harass, hinder or molest the Animal Control Officer in the performance of duties, or seek to release any animal in custody. (Ord. 693 § 2, 2013; Ord. 511 § 1, 1995).

**8.20.010 Persistent noise – Declared nuisance – Abatement.**

---

A. The persistent maintenance and emission of any noise or sound produced by human, animal, electrical, radio or mechanical means between the hours of 10:00 p.m., and 7:00 a.m., next ensuing, which by reason of its raucous or nerve-racking nature, disturbs the peace, quiet or comfort, or is injurious to the health of any person, constitutes a public nuisance.

B. Whenever the existence of any such nuisance comes to the attention of the Chief of Police, it shall be the Chief's duty to notify in writing the occupant of the premises upon which said nuisance exists, specifying the measures necessary to abate such nuisance, and unless the same is abated within 48 hours thereafter the occupants so notified shall be guilty of a violation of this chapter and the Chief of Police shall summarily abate such nuisance.

## Constant Barking can be Avoided

### **Here are some helpful tips**

Barking comes naturally to dogs. Unfortunately the constant barking or whining of a dog can be disturbing or annoying for the neighbors. Often the problem occurs when the dog's owner is out of the house and so the owner does not know until someone complains.

In law, a barking dog can be a noise nuisance. The owner can be taken to court if he or she does nothing to stop the nuisance. This leaflet suggests some simple things a dog owner can try.

### ***Why dogs bark***

Dogs are not by nature solitary animals. They need the security of a family group. Pet dogs regard their owners as a substitute family and can soon become distressed when left alone.

There are many reasons your dog may bark:

- Defending territory
- Fear or alarm
- Boredom
- Loneliness
- Greeting or play
- Attention seeking
- Separation Anxiety
- Compulsive Barking
- Medical problems

### ***The importance of training***

Training is important so that your dog does not bark at just anything that moves. A well-trained dog should be able to tell between people allowed into the house and people who are intruders. Good training combined with affection and companionship should mean that your dog will not develop bad habits. Start young and be consistent in your training.

## ***Some simple things to try***

Some dogs just do not want you to go out. Train your dog to be used to the idea that you are away for different periods of time at different times of the day. That way your dog might not be so concerned each time you leave. Additionally, do not make a fuss over your dog when you leave.

Try putting your dog on his own in another room at first for a few minutes and then gradually build up the time you leave your dog alone. Do not return to your dog until he is quiet for a period. When you return, praise him.

Some dogs will bark because they want to join in what's going on outside. If this is the problem, try leaving your dog that he cannot see outside.

Some dogs will settle only if they can hear a human voice. Leaving a radio on at low volume might help. However, make sure the radio is not too loud. You do not want to have complaints about the radio as well.

Try not to leave your dog for long periods. If you have to, see if there is someone that can look in during that time. Maybe that person could take your dog for a walk or play with the dog for at least an hour a day.

If you have to leave your dog for long periods:

- Feed and exercise your dog before you go out and leave adequate fresh water
- Make sure their bed or basket is comfortable and leave out their favorite toys
- Check that the room is not hot or cold and that there is adequate ventilation
- If you are not coming back until after dark, leave a light on

## ***Some other points***

If you do keep your dog outside, think carefully on where the kennel is placed and where the dog can run. Try not to put the kennel near your neighbor's fence when possible, as this may tempt your dog to bark.

The main reason why dogs learn to bark excessively at every person who passes their territory is the simple fact that most of those people go away again. The dog does not realize that passing citizens did not want to come in – your dog thinks it has successfully chased off an intruder.

Do not blame your dog and do not think that you will solve the problem by replacing your dog with another dog. It probably will not, unless you change your lifestyle at the same time.

Getting a second dog for company may help, but think about this carefully. Do you have the space and can you afford a second dog? Another dog could result in more problems rather than less problems.

### ***But nothing I do works***

If your dog is busy chewing, it is very unlikely he will be barking at the same time. Good chew toys may help deter consistent barking. Leave out several special chew toys just before you leave for the day and pick them up when you return home. Another good item is a specialized chew toy or similar toy that dispenses treats when rolled. You fill the toy with your dog's treats and they have to work on it to receive the treat. Additionally, if the dog is left outside, you can place several chews around the yard for your dog to hunt after.

You should also contact your vet. Sometimes a dog will bark because they are ill. Anxiety is often the cause of barking. Your vet may also be able to refer you to an animal behaviorist that can suggest ways to improve your dog's behavior.

### ***Further information***

There are several resources and publications on animal training and behavior. Check with your local library, book store or online resources. Another source of information, including referrals to dog trainers in your area, is The Association of Pet Dog Trainers. APDT can be reached online at [www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com) or at 1-800-PET-DOGS.

### ***And remember***

Be a responsible dog owner at all times: Make sure your dog is well cared for and well trained. In particular, train your dog not to relieve themselves in public places. If your dog does, remember to "scoop the poop." Also make sure your dog is leashed and has an identification tag when in public places, it is the law.

## Bark Management & Reduction

### What is the behavior?

Dogs have an incredible range of elaborate body language and vocalizations which communicate intentions and emotions to other dogs and people. Barking is a dog's voice. In some situations, you might want your dog to bark (intruder alert). In other situations, your dog's barking might create problems (at a neighbor). What you want to do is to reduce your dog's barking, but not eliminate it altogether.

### Why do dogs bark?

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons including alerting the pack to an intruder, excitement over a hunt, loneliness, anxiety, fear and fun. Some breeds of dogs were developed to be guard dogs or alert barkers. These dogs are more sensitive to sounds or intruders and will often "bark first and ask questions later."

In addition, barking is a self-reinforcing behavior. Some dogs simply enjoy "talking." Hoping the behavior will go away on its own will likely fail. Yelling at your dog for barking simply teaches him that you can bark, too. What you need to do is to remove the reinforcement.

### How do you modify the behavior?

#### *Evaluate the situation:*

The first thing to do is to evaluate the situation(s) that cause your dog to bark. Once you have determined the reason for the barking, you will know how best to address it. The main reasons are:

- **Alert barking:** Dog barks to let you know he has seen or heard something out of the ordinary.
- **Defensive barking:** Dog barks to make something he is afraid of or doesn't like go away.
- **Attention barking:** Dog wants attention.
- **Frustration barking:** Dog is confused, frustrated or stressed.
- **Boredom barking:** Dog barks to amuse himself.

#### *Alert Barking:*

**Training the "Quiet" Cue:** When your dog barks and you are home:

- Go out to him and find out what is causing him to bark – the trigger.
- Praise his alertness and call him to join you back in the house.
- Reward him for coming and label the behavior as "Quiet."
- Cue him to do something else or go to an alternate space to prevent a recurrence.
- If he alerts again, do the same thing and cue "Quiet" after a few barks. Be prepared to do as many repetitions as required to reduce the length of the barking session.

**Eliminating the Trigger:** Of course, eliminating the trigger altogether may be an option to consider.

- If he barks at people or animals passing by the living room window, manage his behavior by closing the curtains or putting him in another room.
- If he barks at passersby when in the yard, bring him into the house. Never leave your dog outside unsupervised all day or night.
- Cover up sporadic noise with a white noise machine, radio or television.

**Desensitization to the Trigger:** Desensitize your dog by gradually getting him accustomed to whatever is causing him to bark.

- Start with the trigger at a distance or at a low sound level. It must be far enough away or at such a low sound level that he doesn't bark when it is first detected.
- Feed him good treats and praise calm behavior.
- Move the stimulus a little closer or increase the sound level. You want your dog to learn that the presence of the stimulus leads to good things (treats!).

**Defensive Barking:**

Move your dog away from the object he is afraid of. He is barking to make "it" go away. Your action tells him that you have the situation handled and he doesn't need to worry. Consider adding the steps for Desensitization to the Trigger method above to your training routine.

**Attention Barking:**

When your dog barks at you for attention, it is often an escalation of his previous efforts to connect with you. If you provide very brief bits of attention to your dog each time he seeks it, it's unlikely the escalation to barking will occur.

If, however, your dog discovers that his barking leads to your attention, you will want to ignore him when he barks and reward him when he is quiet.

**Frustration Barking:**

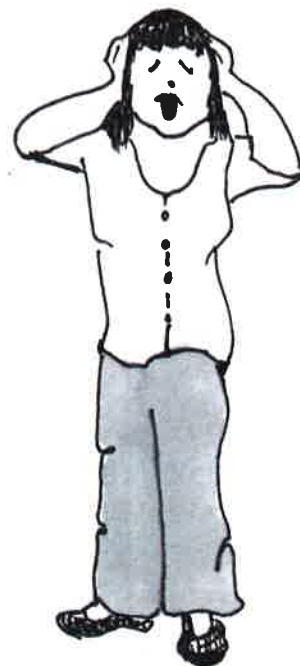
If your dog barks when he is on leash, it is most likely frustration barking. Cue an alternative behavior such as "Find it" or "Touch" and move away from the object of frustration. Removing your dog from the environment will eliminate the cause of the stress. (Please see our handout on **Barking & Lunging & Snarling, Oh My!** for further information.)

**Boredom Barking:**

Make sure your dog is getting sufficient physical and mental exercise every day. A tired dog is a good dog and one who is less likely to bark from boredom or frustration. Depending on his breed, age and health, your dog may require several long walks as well as a good game of chasing the ball and playing with some interactive toys every day.



When you leave your dog alone (after a good game of fetch), leave him with a stuffed Kong or hide treats around the house for him to discover. These will engage him and reduce the chance of boredom barking. (Please see our handout on **Enrichment Toys** for more ideas.)





***Barking in Class:***

- Most dogs will occasionally bark in a group class setting. Redirect your dog by cuing a “Find it” or “Touch” or give him an appropriate chew item. Providing a visual barrier between a barking dog and the rest of the class will often help reduce the barking caused by seeing other dogs. But if your dog can still not be quieted after a few sessions, then he may be under too much stress in that environment. Not all dogs do well in class settings and private one-on-one sessions are more appropriate.

**Training Resources:**

Marin Humane’s **Behavior & Training** conducts various training classes. Sign up on our [Behavior & Training](#) page for the next available class series.

We also provide **Dog Training Instructors** and **Consultants** available for private training or consultations (on-site or in-home) at 415.506.6280 or [OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org](mailto:OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org).

**Remember to license your dog (It’s the LAW)!** If your dog gets lost, a license tag on your dog’s collar is the fastest way to reunite you and your dog. Even if your dog is microchipped, a license tag is immediately visible and doesn’t require a scanning device to read. For more information about licensing, microchipping, and other services provided by Marin Humane, visit us at [MarinHumane.org](http://MarinHumane.org) or stop by at 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd, Novato, CA.