

Information to Complainants

Dog nuisance complaints are often difficult to resolve for a number of reasons:

1. Barking is very subjective with many different interpretations as to what is a nuisance. As a result the degree of annoyance varies with the location of the dog and the tolerance of the complainant.
2. Examples of possible nuisance include:
 - a. barking at medium to high level of passing traffic of people or dogs and the barking continuing for some time after the passer-by has gone;
 - b. barking regularly during the hours of darkness;
 - c. barking, whining and/or howling for regular periods in excess of 15 minutes when the owners are absent, or are inside the house and the dog is outside; or
 - d. barking associated with other behavioural problems (eg. tail chasing).
3. It is extremely difficult to collect reliable and permanent evidence of the frequency and loudness of a dog's barking. The diaries completed by the complainant, their recollection of the dogs barking and how it affects them, will often decide whether legal action is won or lost.
4. A barking complaint may be one aspect of an ongoing feud between two or more neighbours. It is important that the dog nuisance be considered in isolation and does not become part of any wider dispute.
5. The suspected dog may not be responsible for all the barking in the neighbourhood. The complainant must be certain they have identified the correct dog and that it is that dog creating the nuisance.
6. Barking can often disrupt people's lives and most complainants want immediate action to resolve the problem. The process for managing and administering the nuisance can be lengthy and requires the support of complainants in providing the evidence required for the Shire to become involved. Without the necessary evidence in the required format, the Shire cannot act on the matter.
7. Dogs may not engage in nuisance barking when their owners are home. Often dog owners are not aware of the nuisance barking because they are not at home when the dog barks, and/or the dog is not barking when they arrive home.
8. It is important that the dog owner is approached as soon as the dog becomes a nuisance; early action means treatment is more likely to be effective. They should be informed as to when the dog is barking and how it affects their neighbours. The complainant should be courteous, informative and supportive of any suggestions to rectify the problem. However, if the dog owner fails to accept there is a problem, then a complaint should be lodged with the Shire immediately.