

## BARKING AND ANIMAL NUISANCE ORDINANCE

### **My neighbor's dog barks all the time. What do I do?**

You can submit a complaint via telephone at 310-253-6143, via e-mail at [animal.services@culvercity.org](mailto:animal.services@culvercity.org), or via fax at 310-253-6217 (Please ensure to attention: Culver City Animal Services).

If the Culver City Animal Services Officer observes a violation at the time of the visit, appropriate action will be taken. Because most animal ordinances are considered infractions, *the Culver City Animal Services Officer cannot take any legal action unless the Officer actually witnesses a violation in progress.* This does not mean nothing can be done about a violation. Citizens can provide supportive evidence, photographs, video recordings, and documentation regarding a complaint to:

Culver City Animal Services  
Culver City Police Department  
4040 Duquesne Avenue  
Culver City, California 90232

Citizens can also e-mail the information or complaint to:

[animal.services@culvercity.org](mailto:animal.services@culvercity.org)

### **My dog barks all the time. What can I do?**

As a dog owner, you know the companionship, loyalty, love and fun that your dog adds to your life, but you must also realize your responsibility toward your neighbors. Excessive barking can be a source of great irritation for neighbors as well as those who have to live with a noisy dog. The security of knowing you have a real watchdog, as well as enjoying a peaceful and quiet neighborhood, is well worth the effort.

Barking is a natural behavior for dogs. However, excessive barking is often a sign that something may be 'wrong.'

The first step in solving the problem is to determine why your dog is barking excessively:

1. Your dog is bored, lonely or frustrated due to a lack of company, exercise, or mental stimulation. If left in the backyard for long periods, barking may be an enjoyable way for dogs to pass the time. Dogs are also social pack animals and may suffer from anxiety when left alone.
  - o Walk your dog at least 2 to 3 times daily. Include your dog on family outings.
  - o Find a designated off-leash area to give your dog a free run.
  - o Make the backyard environment more interesting.
  - o Take an obedience class with your dog and practice what you learn regularly to provide mental stimulation for the dog.
  - o Provide fun toys, such as indestructible hollow toys stuffed with snacks, to keep your dog busy when you're not home.
  - o Ensure that your dog has fresh water, a balanced diet, and adequate shelter from the weather. If possible, give your dog access to the house through a dog door.

2. Your dog is alerting or warning you of a perceived threat, such as animals, postal workers, noises, or the movements outside of your property.
  - Teach your dog a “quiet” command.
  - Desensitize your dog to the stimulus that triggers the barking, if possible.
  - Keep stray animals and wildlife off your property. Devices and repellants, such as a motion sensed sprinkler device, specific plants, and metal bands and metal funnel guards around trees are effective in deterring wildlife.
  - Block your dog’s view of movement with solid fencing, shade cloth or hedging.
  - If children are teasing your dog, try to discuss the problem with them.
  - Establish another internal fence to restrict your dog’s access to the stimulus.
  - Create a setting in which your dog will not feel that territorial urge to defend itself.
3. Your dog is afraid of something.
  - Identify what is frightening your dog. Remove or desensitize him to the stimulus.
  - Mute outside noise by leaving your dog in a comfortable area in a basement or bathroom and leave a television, radio or fan on.
  - Block your dog’s access to outdoor views that might be causing a fear response.
4. Your dog is suffering from separation anxiety.
  - Teach your dog the sit-stay and down-stay commands using positive reinforcement to help your dog remain calmly in one place while you go to another room.
  - Desensitize your dog to the stimulus that triggers the barking.
  - Don’t make a big deal out of arrivals and departures. When you arrive home, ignore your dog for the first 10 minutes and then calmly pet your dog.
  - Leave an article of dirty laundry that smells like you, such as a shirt that you’ve slept in, to lend a calming olfactory cue.
  - Utilize an over-the-counter calming product that may reduce fearfulness in dogs.
  - Consult a professional animal behavior specialist or trainer for assistance.
5. Your dog has an injury or health problem.
  - Make sure that your dog is in good health, by taking your dog to the veterinarian for regular check-ups.
  - Ensure that your dog has fresh water, a balanced diet, and adequate shelter from the weather. If possible, give your dog access to the house through a dog door.

Remember that training takes time and persistence. **NEVER** hit or strike your dog. This will not address the problem and will likely create confusion and fear in your dog. Devices such as anti-bark static (electrical) correction or citronella spray collars are available at many stores and online. Spraying water from spray bottles can help break your dog’s focus, but don’t spray directly into your dog’s face. Spray at the hindquarters as the point is as a distraction. If you need help with dog training, ask your veterinarian for advice. You can also look under ‘Dog Training’ in the yellow pages.

For a brochure on how to address your barking dog: <https://www.culvercity.org/home/showdocument?id=12456>

## **What constitutes a nuisance animal or a barking dog?**

Animal ownership is welcomed within Culver City; however, strong emphasis is placed on responsible ownership of animals. Animal owners are encouraged to respect the rights of their fellow residents and also those of their animals. Primary responsibility is placed upon animal owners to properly train and/or secure their animals so as to prevent them from causing injuries and/or creating nuisances.

Barking dogs, whining puppies, chirping pet birds, and squawking pet birds are all examples of noise found in major urban areas. Understandably, certain noise levels must be tolerated by all residents in order for normal functions of urban life to continue. However, excessive, unnecessary, and/or annoying noise is subject to regulation. The nuisance animal ordinance states that it is illegal for any animal to bark, howl, yelp, bay, or make any sounds common to the species, in a manner that disturbs the peace of the neighborhood.

Undoubtedly, it is unusual and difficult for an Animal Services Officer to witness or verify an offense of this nature in person. The Animal Services Officer does not live in the neighborhood and is unable to dedicate hours or days at a residence to observe for a nuisance violation. The enforcement of the nuisance ordinances depends on different variables existing at the time of the Animal Services Officer's investigation. The totality of the evidence and reasonable interpretation of the nuisance ordinance must be considered to determine whether the behavior would meet the threshold of "nuisance" and a violation [*Culver City Municipal Code 9.01.035 and 9.07.030*]. Supportive documentation, written logs, video and audio recordings, and other neighbor testimonies provided by the complainant will also assist in this determination. **Violations are subject to citations with fines up to \$500.**

Based on experience, research and training, these examples constitute the majority of the nuisance complaint and demonstrate nuisance violations:

1. Unprovoked animal barks every a minute for several hours during the day
2. Unprovoked animal barks for approximately 30 seconds then stops for approximately a minute and then starts barking again for approximately 25 seconds and then stops for approximately two minutes and then starts barking again when unprovoked.
3. Unprovoked animal barks continuously non-stop for 5 minutes