



Barking Complaints for Neighbors

A dog in your neighborhood is causing a problem; its barking is making you miserable. You know it is not really the dog's fault, but it may be disrupting your sleep, or preventing you from enjoying a relaxing time in your backyard.

Barking complaints do not have quick or simple solutions. We cannot just take the dog nor magically make it stop barking. The citation procedure has several steps. We hope the following information will help you understand what local ordinances say about noise caused by pet animals and how we can help with the problem.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do the local ordinances say about noise caused by pet animals?

- City and County ordinances state:
 - “Any person who harbors, keeps, maintains, or has temporary custody of a pet animal shall be responsible for the behavior of such animal whether the owner knowingly permits the behavior or not. Such person shall violate the terms ... if such person’s animal constitutes a nuisance pet animal ...”
 - “Nuisance pet animal means a pet animal that ... habitually or continually disturbs the peace of any individual or neighborhood by barking, whining, howling or making any other noise ...”

What is considered habitual and continuous?

- Animal Services considers a dog barking to be continuous and habitual if it barks, howling or crying is non-stop for at least 30 minute stretches.
- The dog that barks five or ten random minutes, morning and/or evening, is not considered habitually or continually barking.
- A dog that barks all day long with a steady yapping, or howls all day or night with quiet times of only ten minutes or so is a “continuous barker.”
- A dog that barks steadily from 10 pm to 2 am every night is a “habitual barker.”
- A dog that barks when kids play with it or when it’s excited by people doing yard work or passing by is not a habitual barker.
- A dog that barks at everything (kids, birds, other dogs, cats, squirrels, etc.) is a nuisance barker, if the barking episodes are continuous for 30 minutes or more.
- A dog that barks for five minutes every Saturday morning at 6 am is not a habitual barker. Irritating but not habitual.

Who responds to “barking dog” complaints?

- Animal Services responds to barking dog complaints within the city limits of Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater, Yelm and in Unincorporated Thurston County.

What information does Animal Services need?

- The most important information we will need is the exact address of where the dog lives. We cannot take action if we cannot locate the dog. Knowing who the owner is can be helpful. We will want to know if this is a new issue or has this been going on for some time as well as when does the barking occur and for how long does it last. We will want to know if there is more than one dog and ideally, a description of each dog involved. We will also want to know if you have already discussed the issue with your neighbor.

What happens after I make a barking complaint?

- We will create a complaint in our system so we can track all barking complaints received about the dogs in question. We will assign the complaint to an Animal Control Officer who will look at all complaints we have had on this dog.
- If this is the first complaint we have received, or is it the first complaint in the last 60 days, our first step is to inform the dog owner that a complaint has been made against them. We will ask them to take steps to correct the barking. Many times our first contact with an owner is the first time they are aware the barking has become an issue for their neighbors.

What happens if the dog continues to bark after I made my complaint?

- We ask that you give your neighbors a couple of weeks to correct the barking. If after a couple of weeks the barking is still a problem, we will need a 30-minute audio or video clip of the barking. Once you have obtained the clip, please submit it with a new complaint. We can start issuing citations if the barking is shown to be habitual and continuous. That recording is the information we need to take those next steps.

What else can be done?

- Other avenues: The Dispute Resolution Center is a nonprofit organization supported by local government that is intended to help people resolve problems they cannot work out alone. It costs nothing or very little, and can produce some amazing results. The Dispute Resolution Center's number is 360956-1155.

How do I file a complaint?

- You can file a statement of complaint on our website at [Forms + Information - Joint Animal Services](#), or in person at the shelter located at 3120 Martin Way E. Olympia, WA. 98506

Is my complaint confidential?

- When you fill out the complaint form you can request non-disclosure of your personal information if a public records request is made, however if citations are issued your information is available to the courts and you could be called to testify if the citation is contested.