

Dog Fights & Barking



Community Ranger Services

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WHY DO DOGS FIGHT

Dogs have always fought over food, the right to mate, the position in a pack and in defense of their young or territory. Individual dogs may vary in their inclination to fight because of their breeding, socialisation, experience and training.

Socialisation

Dogs that have been well socialized with other dogs from an early age are less likely to fight.

Leashes

Preventing contact between unfamiliar dogs is one reason why dogs must be on a lead in public places. What may happen when two unfamiliar dogs meet cannot be predicted with any great certainty. A normally friendly dog may take a dislike to another dog and start to fight.

Protectiveness

Fights between dogs may occur when one of the dogs is protecting it's territory, it's owner or itself. A dog that is allowed to wander onto the road will usually claim the road verge as it's own and may attack other dogs passing by.

Breed

Dogs of any breed or cross may be involved in dog fights, particularly if they have not been socialised with other dogs. Some breeds or individual dogs might be more likely to fight, as they have been selected for their fighting or guarding abilities. When buying a puppy, choose the breed carefully. Ask to see the parents of the pup to see what their temperaments are like.



Training

Obedience training alone will not stop a dog from fighting, but will make it easier for the owner to control the dog and prevent a fight or stop a fight once it has been started.

Pecking Order

It is very normal for dogs to form a 'pecking order'. Fighting will continue to occur if people interfere with this order by treating the dogs as equal. When two dogs live together, particularly if they are of the same sex, it is important to reinforce the 'top' dogs position.

Sex

Castration can reduce fighting in male dogs. Female dogs may also be aggressive to each other but male vs. female fights are less common. If purchasing two dogs, a person should obtain one of each sex and have them sterilized if they are not going to be used for breeding. When a dog is fighting due to being protective or frightened, or if a dog has been trained to fight, sterilization will have no effect.

PREVENTING A DOG FIGHT

Many dog fights occur in public places. Having dogs on leads will help you to separate dogs should they become aggressive. However, you must remain vigilant in case your dog is approached by another dog off it's lead.

If your dog is on a lead and you are approached by a dog which is off it's lead, you should leave the area by slowly backing away. If the other dog tried to follow, try telling it to 'SIT' or 'STAY'.

Small dogs may be picked up and carried as the owner slowly backs away from the other dog.

DO NOT:

- Scream and shout
- Turn around and run away
- Move forward or allow your dog to rush forward
- Strike out or kick at the other dog

These actions are likely to make the other dog more aggressive.

Understanding dog body language can help you realize when your dog or another dog is being aggressive before a fight starts.

Signs of aggression include:

- Slow deliberate movements when approaching other people or dogs
- A stiff legged walk and tall posture
- Ears erect and hairs on the back and neck raised
- Tail horizontal or upright (the tail CAN be wagging)
- A direct stare
- Growling, snarling or curling of the upper lip

Remember that nervous dogs may become aggressive if they feel cornered or threatened.

Obedience training will help you to be able to control your dog's behaviours whether it is on or off the leash, and prevent a fight from starting.



SOME COMMON MYTHS ABOUT DOG BARKING

MYTH 1

A dog that barks a lot is a good watch dog.

FALSE! Dogs that bark excessively make poor security systems as neighbours often ignore the barking.

MYTH 2

My dog does not bark when I am at home, so it does not bark when I am out.

FALSE! Many dogs bark because of anxiety and isolation. Most complaints are about dogs that bark when their owners are not home.

MYTH 3

Sterilization will stop a dog from barking.

FALSE! Sterilization does not stop barking except where dogs are barking at neighbouring dogs of the same sex, or when a male dog can sense a female dog in season. However, sterilization is strongly recommended for other reasons.

MYTH 4

It is natural for dogs to bark a lot.

FALSE! Barking is one of the dogs main ways of communicating. However, it is NOT normal for a dog to bark at every noise, passer by, nor to bark for long periods of time.

MYTH 5

Dogs that bark do so because they are lonely and need another dog for company.

FALSE! Getting another dog does not usually prevent or fix a barking problem.

MYTH 6

Dogs only bark too much if they are teased, bored or not exercised.

FALSE! Dogs bark for many reasons including breeding, inappropriate confinement, passing distractions, isolation, guarding, anxiety, discomfort and attention seeking. It is important to work out why the dog is barking before the problem can be solved.

SIMPLE TIPS FOR BARKING

- ◆ Make sure that you do not reward your dog for barking too much.
- ◆ If the dog is barking at people or noises on the other side of the fence, move the dog to another part of the yard, or put up a barrier to keep the dog away from that area.
- ◆ If the dog barks at regular disturbances such as children walking to school or rubbish trucks, keep the dog inside or in an enclosed area at these times.
- ◆ If the dog races along a path or fence barking at passing distractions, put barriers or obstacles in the dog's way to slow it down.
- ◆ Ensure that the dog has adequate exercise and obedience training.
- ◆ Make sure that the dog has food, water and shelter from the weather.
- ◆ If the dog is barking at gaps and crack in the fence, fill them in.
- ◆ If the dog is barking at people it can see passing by, try blocking the dog's view.
- ◆ An anti-barking collar may be useful for some, but not all, barking dogs. Contact the Community Rangers for more details.
- ◆ Teach the dog to stop barking on command. When the dog is barking give a firm command such as 'CEASE' and call the dog to you. Praise the dog when it stops Barking. If the dog will not listen to you it will need obedience training.
- ◆ **DOGS BARK FOR MANY REASONS AND IF THESE SIMPLE TIPS DO NOT HELP YOU, THEN YOU SHOULD SEEK PROFESSIONAL ADVICE.** Your veterinarian may be able to help you, or refer you to an animal behaviourist. The Community Rangers may also be able to assist, or provide information regarding the 'Backline' service.

Community Rangers are available to discuss this matter further. Our contact details are on the front of this brochure.