

DOES YOUR DOG' S BARKING DRIVE YOU CRAZY?

Does your dog bark at visitors or passers by? Does your dog bark when you' re not home? Is the noise annoying your family and neighbors? Don' t despair, there' s hope for your dog!

The best treatment available right now is an ingenious collar called the ABS Anti-barking System. It is a safe, humane behavior-modifying training tool. When it senses the dog bark it emits a puff of citronella scent, which is offensive to dogs. It doesn' t shock them or hurt them, it just smells bad. Most dogs very quickly learn to associate the barking and the bad smell and will soon cease barking when they wear the collar.

The collar has a battery operated sound sensor. The citronella comes in cartridges that are replaced as needed. The company reports an 88% success rate with use of the collar alone and almost 100% success if the collar is combined with assistance from a behaviorist.

The cost of the collar is about \$125, and refill cartridges are about \$22. You can purchase your own or you can first rent a collar from us, at a cost of \$25 per week. If you rent the collar, you will also need to purchase the citronella refill cartridge, and there is a deposit of \$100 when you take the collar home. If you return it in good repair we will refund the \$100 deposit. If the collar is damaged and we have to replace it, you will not get the deposit back. Usually a one week rental is sufficient to see if the ABS collar will work for your dog and in your particular situation. After one week, if the collar has worked for your dog, you can purchase a new ABS collar through us for \$100.

If you don' t want to invest the money for an anti-bark collar there are other things you can do to discourage barking. First, do not "bark" back at the dog. Shouting only increases the barking and its volume. When the dog barks in your presence, call him to you as quietly as the barking will allow. If the barking is about something unusual that you think needs attention, go investigate, but do so quietly. "Shush" the dog with a whisper and hand signal (like putting your finger to your mouth) if he starts to bark again. Then go back to where you were and settle down. Call the dog, ask him to sit and keep him close by, praise and pet briefly if he stays calm and quiet. Leaving a leash on while you are practicing allows you to pull the dog toward you if he does not come and sit readily.

Be persistent with this routine for six weeks. You are trying to teach the dog an alternate behavior, sitting and staying by you, for which you can reward him. During the course of the six weeks you should start to notice the dog sound his first alarm bark, then turn and look to you. If you are out of the room, he will seek you. That is ideal watch dog behavior - to let you know of a problem or visitor and then look to you for direction on what to do next.

Barking when you aren' t home is more difficult and complicated. This is where use of the ABS collar is ideal, but there are other ways to train a dog to be less territorial and reduce the noise your neighbors are complaining about as well. These take more space than this handout permits, but we have handouts on other helpful behavioral techniques and we are always available to help you start a behavioral program for your dog. In severe or unusual cases we can also refer you to a behavioral specialist.

Please call us if you have any questions regarding the ABS collar or any other behavioral problem in your pet.