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Barking Dog

General Information

Barking is a normal dog behavior and is one of the many forms of vocal communication for dogs. Certain breeds of dogs may tend to bark more than others; however, barking should be expected when owning any dog. Some barking may be helpful, like when your dog barks when someone is at the door or if they need something. Just because barking is a normal doggy behavior used for communication, it doesn't mean we must live with excessive or inappropriate barking.

Causes

Dogs often bark at things that startle, scare, or excite them. With proper socialization and training, your dog will react less to these things. Socialize your dog to as many shapes, sounds, textures, experiences, and things that you can. The more confident your dog is, the less unwanted behaviors, including barking, will occur. Your dog gets some type of reward when he barks. Otherwise, he wouldn't do it. All behaviors that are rewarded will be repeated. Figure out what he gets out of barking and remove it. Don't give your dog the opportunity to continue unwanted barking behavior. But remember, your goal should be to decrease excessive or inappropriate barking and not eliminate all barking.

Addressing the Problem

Try to find and understand the possible causes for your dog's excessive or inappropriate barking. First, rule out any medical problems. If it is not medical, it is usually behavioral. Solutions include treating medical problems, tracking your dog's behavioral history, making environmental changes, and reshaping the dog's behavior through consistent training. Follow some of these helpful tips to help with barking:

- Exercise! A tired dog is a good dog.
- Behavior management - do not allow barking behaviors
- Teach "Speak" and "Hush" on command
- Provide outlets for mental and physical energy
- Teach basic obedience and practice often
- Provide proper socialization to prevent unwanted behaviors
- Remove the motivation for barking behaviors
- Ignore attention seeking barking – be patient – and reward your dog when he is quiet
- Desensitize your dog to stimuli that cause barking (doorbell, knocking, outside noises, etc.)
- Seek help from a professional when other options have been exhausted