

Dog Behaviourist For Barking Dog Complaints Trial



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Background

- City of PAE receive over 300 complaints about barking dogs each year
- Barking dog complaints are a source of irritation for neighbours
- Can affect neighbourhood relationships
- Hundreds of hours of Community Safety Officer time taken to investigate

Existing Process

- Verbal Complaint Received by Council
- Community Safety Officer speaks with complainant and discuss various options such as
 - Speaking with dog owner
 - Use anonymous letters
 - Use of mediation services
- Community Safety Officer speaks with dog owner
- If above fails, complainant to completes barking dog diary and CSO begins formal investigation

Trial

- Dog behaviourist to provide a consultation and two follow up visits to dog owners home
- Council to pay for dog behaviourist
- Behaviour modification plan developed
- No further action/investigation is undertaken by Council during behaviourist program

Case Study I

Siberian Husky X Cattle Dog “Nala”

- 1st barking dog complaint July 2014
- Multiple investigations undertaken over 2.5 year period
- Multiple neighbours complaining
- Dog owner had attempted obedience training with a dog trainer – Felt lost
- Neighbourhood breakdown

Case Study I

Nala's unwanted behaviours:

- Barking when home alone
- Barking at unusual noises
- Jumping at a door when owner walks up hall
- Unable to settle – especially with visitors
- Snapping at children
- Pulling on lead
- Unable to focus on handler

Case Study I

Action recommended by behaviourist:

- Medication for severe anxiety
- Environmental management
 - Crate training
 - Adaptil
 - Use of front harness when walking
 - Modification to bedding
- Environmental enrichment
 - Interactive toys
 - Playing scent games
- Behaviour modification
 - Whisper training
 - Counter-conditioning

Case Study I

Outcome:

Dog barking reduced

Dog owner learnt skills to manage dog

Dog was calmer and happier

Complainant was calmer and happier

Neighbourhood relationship improved

Case Study I



Case Study 2

Pomeranian “Andy”

- 1st barking dog complaint February 2016
- Four complaints received over 12 month period
- Dog owner had limited knowledge in owning a dog especially training
- Neighbourhood breakdown

Case Study 2

Andy's unwanted behaviours:

- Barking at magpies and birds in the yard
- Barking for extended periods of time
- Whining
- Pacing
- Jumping
- Clinging

Case Study 2

Action recommended by behaviourist:

- Environmental management
 - Andy should spend more time inside house
 - Crate training
 - Adaptil
- Environmental enrichment
 - Exercise everyday
 - Use of interactive toys
 - Play scent games
- Behaviour modification
 - Whisper training
- Basic training exercises
- Owner education

Case Study 2

Outcome:

Dog was rehomed as the owner could not commit to training

Neighbourhood relationship improved

Current Barking Dog Process

- Verbal barking complaint received
- CSO contact complainant and discuss informal process
- CSO contact dog owner and discuss concerns and suggestions to resolve issue
- If mutual acknowledgement from both parties about issue and willingness to undertake training, offer dog behaviourist

Outcomes

- Since November 2016 behaviourist has been used in 7 cases
- 3 dogs were diagnosed with anxiety
- 2 required behavioural & environmental training
- I had cognitive dysfunction
- I had high arousal levels

Outcomes

- Dog barking is reduced and any underlying health/behavioural issues are addressed
- Dog owner understands the barking behaviour and has the skills to address
- Neighbours have noise level reduced
- Neighbourhood relationships improve
- Reduction in time taken by CSO's investigating complaint
- Reduction in cases where a Control Order is required

Conclusion

Whilst there is a cost to Council for a dog behaviourist, the reduction in officer hours investigating barking dog complaints and the ability to rebuild communities and neighbourhood relationships far outweighs any financial costs incurred.



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