

## Is an Anti-bark Collar Right for Your Barking Dog?

Barking is normal behavior for dogs, but when it occurs excessively it's unpleasant for your neighbors and negatively affects your dog's behavioral health. Although we describe your dog as "barking," we'll use this word to refer to other sounds your dog could be making such as howling, whining, yelping, or even screaming.

You have been offered the use of an anti-bark collar as a possible solution to your dog's barking problem. Anti-bark collars can be good solutions for some, but not all barking problems. In some cases, the use of such collars can create more problems for your dog. Anti-bark collars should **not** be used on dogs that are barking from pain, illness, a compulsion, fear, separation anxiety, or aggression. Anti-bark collars generally work well for excessive alarm or alert barking and attention-getting barking.

To decide whether an anti-bark collar may be right for your dog, you need to know what sounds your dog is making, what he looks like when he barks, and the circumstances surrounding the barking. Answer the following questions. If your animal control officer has observed your dog's barking, he or she may be able to help you in answering these questions.

1. Does your dog look or sound fearful when he is barking? If you aren't sure, read the description on fearful body postures.
2. Does your dog look or sound threatening or aggressive when he is barking? If you aren't sure, read the description on offensively and defensively threatening postures.
3. Does your dog look or sound sick or in pain when he is barking?
4.
  - a. Does your dog begin barking most every day soon after you leave the house?
  - b. Does your dog want to be with you most of the time, and often follow you around the house?
  - c. When left alone, has your dog often damaged doors, windows or the fence, or even escaped from the yard?
5.
  - a. Does your dog seem to be barking at nothing, and is oblivious to things around him when he is barking?
  - b. Is it hard to distract your dog when he is barking?
  - c. Does your dog run in circles or do something else over and over again while barking?

If your dog is **FEARFUL** (YES to question 1), **AGGRESSIVE** (YES to question 2), **SICK OR IN PAIN** (YES to question 3), has **SEPARATION ANXIETY** (YES to any part of question 4), or has a **COMPULSIVE DISORDER** (YES to all parts of question 5), we do not recommend an anti-bark collar for your dog. Use of a collar for these problems can be dangerous. Instead, ask your animal control officer, animal shelter or veterinarian for a referral to a qualified behavior consultant. If you aren't sure how to answer a question, or if you have any other reason to believe your dog has one of the problems mentioned above, see a qualified behavior consultant.

If you answered **no** to these questions, it is likely an anti-bark collar may help with your dog's barking problem. Be sure to **CAREFULLY READ ALL** the instructions that come with the collar and follow them closely. Contact your animal control officer immediately if you have questions. Remember to reward your dog whenever possible for being quiet. If your dog's barking continues, or you notice your dog becoming fearful or aggressive, **STOP** using the collar and seek professional help.

### Body Postures to Look For

In each category, dogs may show some, but not all postures

#### Fearful, Distressed or Anxious Dog

1. Crouches, with head and neck held low
2. Tail down or tucked between the legs
3. Ears rotated back, flattened to the side or laid down against the head
4. Looks away or tries to avoid direct eye contact
5. Tries to avoid the person, animal or thing the dog is barking at
6. Paces, shakes, trembles or salivates
7. May try to escape the yard or house
8. May whine, whimper, bark or howl



#### Offensively Threatening Dog

1. Stands tall with a stiff body posture
2. Hair on the back may be standing up
3. Tail straight up, may be wagging slowly and deliberately
4. Ears up and forward
5. Direct eye contact or staring
6. May lunge, snap, snarl at or chase others
7. Barks and/or growls



#### Defensively Threatening Dog

1. Crouches, with head and neck held low
2. Tail straight out, down or tucked between the legs
3. Ears rotated back, flattened to the side or laid down against the head
4. Usually looks away or tries to avoid direct eye contact
5. Tries to avoid the person, animal or thing the dog is barking at
6. May bark or growl



Some dogs may show a combination of offensive and defensive threats.

**For immediate access to more help and information, visit [www.barkinghelp.com](http://www.barkinghelp.com)**