



Complaint investigation process

Under the Council of the City of Gold Coast (Council) Local Law No.12 (Animal Management) 2013, owners are responsible for ensuring their animal(s) don't cause a noise nuisance. A noise nuisance is a noise that disrupts or inhibits an activity ordinarily carried out.

Many people keep animals for companionship however, noisy animals may greatly reduce the quality of life for neighbours and increase neighbourhood tensions. While barking dogs are the most common problem, other animals such as birds and poultry can also cause a noise nuisance.



Tips for neighbours

If your neighbour has a noisy animal, take the time to talk to them as they may not be aware that their animal is causing a noise nuisance. Your feedback may help them understand and resolve any problems that may be contributing to their behaviour.

After we receive a complaint, the following investigation process is completed:

1. We contact the owner in writing to advise them that: a complaint has been received; they are required to monitor the behaviour of their animal(s) and take appropriate action if necessary; and that there are legal ramifications for not abating any noise nuisance. No further action will be taken at this stage.

Not all noise may constitute a noise nuisance under the Local Law. We must be satisfied that they are in fact creating a noise nuisance.

2. If further complaints are received, we will undertake a comprehensive investigation to determine if a noise nuisance exists.
3. If we are unable to determine that a noise nuisance exists, no further action will be taken. However, if we are satisfied that a nuisance exists, a notice may be served to the owner of the offending animal(s), requiring the noise nuisance to be abated.

The owner may have to seek help from an animal behaviourist or trainer if they are unsuccessful in abating the noise nuisance through their own approach.

4. Should the owner of the animal fail to comply with the notice, we may issue a fine, commence legal action or take other action to resolve the matter.

A successful resolution can be a lengthy process and relies on all parties (complainant, animal owners and Council) working together.

Barking

Barking is a natural behaviour for dogs and is one of the ways they communicate. However, if barking is: excessive; occurs for extended periods of time; too frequent or at inappropriate times of day or night, it must be addressed. Barking may be classified as a noise nuisance if it causes distress to the owner or neighbours.

Ongoing barking is often a symptom of another problem. Taking time to understand what makes dogs bark is the first step towards solving the problem, both for the dog and the neighbours.

A dog may bark because it is:

- lonely, bored and frustrated
- stressed from being separated from its owner
- a learnt behaviour to get what they want
- seeking attention
- scared of people, objects or other animals
- feeling that its territory is threatened
- stimulated from playing
- unwell.

Ways to reduce barking

Barking can be controlled through several small behavioural and environmental changes, such as walks twice a day to relieve boredom. The following table provides possible solutions to some causes of barking.



Possible solutions to barking problem

		Exercise	Training	Enrichment	Change routine	Change environment	Vet check
Cause of barking	Lack of stimulation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Over stimulation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Separation anxiety	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Health issue		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

For more information

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