

Barking Dogs and Other Animal Concerns



Laws change frequently and vary from city to city and from state to state. This information should not be construed as legal advice.

When you wake up night after night to a barking dog in your neighborhood, your patience can grow thin. Or maybe the neighbor's rooster likes to get up MUCH earlier than you do. People who normally love animals may find themselves angry and intolerant of their neighbor's beloved pet. With good planning and communication, you can live in harmony with your pets and neighbors.

When you are thinking about getting a pet:

Pets are wonderful companions. However, the Humane Society cautions people to consider the needs of the animal before committing to being an owner. What breed of dog is right for you and your situation? What are the consequences of allowing your cat outside? Do you have adequate space to raise chickens?

Dogs especially are social creatures, and introducing a new dog to your neighbors can go a long way to making friends. Stop and chat with neighbors while you are walking your dog. Make sure they know your name as well as his. You may want to provide nearby neighbors with your phone number. Ask them if they will alert you to problems and emergencies. Encourage your neighbors to let you know if they are experiencing problems with your dog.

Is the owner aware?

A cat owner may not know where their cat wanders or if it is a problem for a neighbor. A dog may only bark when the owner is not at home. If a neighbor's pet has become

Tips on approaching conflict:

1. **Assess** the situation.
2. **Request** a time to talk.
3. **Share**, not just tell.
4. **Know** what you'll say.
5. **Listen** respectfully, as you would want to be heard.
6. **Be open** to different solutions.
7. **Make an agreement**, at least about the next step.
8. **Thank** the other person for working with you.

What does the law say?

- King County Title 11:
[Animal Care and Control](#)
- Report pet or livestock complaints to [RASKC](#)
- Report wildlife issues to [Fish and Wildlife](#)

Contact Us:

[Intake Form](#)

425-452-4091

bcrc@bellevuewa.gov

BellevueWA.gov/resolve

a problem, it's best to talk with your neighbor first. For example, Regional Animal Services enforce animal noise complaints, but only after the complainant has spoken directly to the owner, and only if other neighbors are also disturbed.

Barking dogs

Barking dogs are a common source of tension between neighbors. Dogs bark for different reasons, and training may be different depending on the reason for barking. The Humane Society suggests observing your dog and changing your training techniques based on whether the dog is barking to alert, to demand, out of fear, or out of boredom.

An owner may want to enlist the help of a dog trainer or a dog behaviorist, who will visit the home, observe the dog, and work to correct the problem. Trainers report excellent success in reducing barking with most dogs and may be able to help with other behavioral concerns.

There are also more controversial techniques to control barking, including anti-bark collars, and de-barking surgery. Some dog trainers and animal rights groups do not recommend these methods, so it may be best to save these suggestions for when training has not been effective.

Correcting the problem

Some pet issues are easier to tackle than others. Maybe it seems easy to keep a cat inside until you learn the cat is an accomplished escape artist. Maybe training can keep a dog from barking but can't keep a rooster from crowing. If your neighbor seems willing to help but the problem isn't going away, assume good intent, and keep the conversation going. A pet owner may be surprised that their steps have not been effective or may be out of ideas for what to try next.

Not all problem behaviors are equal. If an animal is aggressive or bites other animals or people, that is a serious issue that needs to be reported.

How to approach the owner of a problematic pet

Ask yourself some questions:

- What is bothering me most about this behavior?
- What might be affecting your neighbor's pet?
- What do you need in this situation?
- What might your neighbor need?

When approaching your neighbor, express your concerns rather than your solutions. State your concern in a non-threatening way. For example, *"I am having difficulty sleeping because of the noise level at night"* is much less threatening than: *"I want you to keep your dog inside at night."*

Next, express your needs: *"I work at home during the day, and it is important to me to be able to concentrate on my work,"* or, *"I wake up early in the morning and need a good night's rest."*

Be prepared to listen to your neighbor's point of view. Realistic and durable solutions accommodate everyone's needs. Ask the other person to tell you about their pet. Look for a solution that will ensure the problem is permanently solved with no hard feelings.

Ask your neighbor what options they would consider. By engaging the other person in developing options, you will increase the number of ideas to be considered. *"If we could find a solution that afforded you protection and allowed for quiet hours during the night, would you consider it?"*

If you decide that you want to negotiate with your neighbor, but aren't sure how to start the conversation, call the Bellevue Conflict Resolution Center. We can coach you on how to talk with your neighbor, or we can talk to your neighbor for you to learn more about what is important to them and what changes they might be willing to make.

