

## Solutions to Problematic Dog Barking

### Experts offer solutions for excessive barking.

*Rose Boccio*

Posted: Mon Sep 23 00:00:00 PDT 2002

When John Magill moved into his Chicago apartment several years ago, Hunger, his 2-year-old Doberman, was not happy.

The dog barked and barked and barked and Magill's neighbors complained. He had to do something. So he decided to train Hunger not to bark when left alone.

One morning he put Hunger into a dog crate before leaving the apartment. "I took a good book with me and sat outside the apartment waiting," said Magill, who operates Apolda Kennel in Aurora, about 35 miles west of the city.

As soon as Hunger began to bark, Magill pulled a rope that lifted the dog's crate slightly off the ground via a pulley device.

Hunger hushed immediately and Magill gently eased the crate down. Twenty minutes later, the dog began to bark again. Magill repeated the crate lift.

"I had to repeat it a few times, but it didn't take too long to resolve the problem," he said. After a while, Magill let Hunger out of the crate and life resumed as normal with a lot less barking. Hunger now associates excess barking with a slight rise into the air something he didn't particularly enjoy. So the Doberman stopped barking needlessly and kept his feet on the ground.

However, not all problem barkers are so easily cured.

A dog's bark is a form of communication. The dog may be announcing an approaching stranger or that it is lonely, hungry or wants to go out. Most owners and trainers agree the dog's bark is welcome at those times. However, excessive barking can be a severe problem.

If you live in an apartment, as Magill does, you can lose your lease if your dog's persistent barking disturbs the neighbors. If you're living in a house, constant barking can strain your relationship with neighbors as well.

Animal behaviorists and trainers approach the problem differently but with the same goal: A dog that barks once or twice to relay its message and then stops.

You must determine the reason for the dog's barking and address its underlying cause. Start by taking your dog for a health checkup. Sometimes incessant barking can be a cry for help because of pain the animal is experiencing.