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Some Common Problem Behaviours

Barking

Barking is a completely normal behaviour and is the way dogs communicate. It cannot be stopped entirely and some dogs will bark more than others. Some of the reasons why dogs bark are: excitement, greeting, warning, fear, attention, arousal and pain.

Barking is a self rewarding behaviour. For example the dog may bark and the dog down the street barks back, this is why the behaviour continues. Often barking is a problem behaviour because of the lack of mental and physical exercise. Other reasons include attention seeking behaviour and separation anxiety. Some of these reasons may require veterinary attention +/- medication in severe cases.

If your dogs barking is becoming a problem behaviour first you need to look at the reason it is barking. Don't punish. There is no "quick fix" or universal solution. Increase mental and physical stimulation, food toys during the day and training with the dog. Reward the dog when it is calm and quiet. Other ideas include keeping the dog inside if barking at night or restricting access to an area of the yard where the dog can bark at the neighbours.

Digging

Why do dogs dig? It is a normal behaviour which is inappropriate to us. They enjoy it and many of the breeds have it bred into them.

If the behaviour is a problem, try increasing mental and physical stimulation especially with treat toys that they can use when you are not home.

Don't fight it, Work with it! Give them a digging pit of their own and encourage them to use it by burying their toys in it.

Some people will use a deterrent like faeces or rocks in the hole. This may stop them digging the same hole but it will not stop them digging another one right next to it. Remember they cannot read our minds, lets tell them what we want them to do instead of expecting them to guess.

Reminders for a happy pet (and owner!)

- Have realistic expectations
- Remember to keep rewarding the behaviours you want to increase and ignore the ones you want to decrease
- Don't punish, they are not vacuums, if a behaviour is stopped it is replaced with another one, often worse than the first
- Remember some behaviours are self rewarding
- Work with the behaviour to make it more socially acceptable
- Teach the dog where and when to perform the behaviours
- Always reward when your dog is calm and quiet, with a quiet whisper and praise
- Punishment???. The dog will still do the behaviour just not in front of you!!!

