



King County

Department of Executive Services
Records and Licensing Services Division
Regional Animal Services

Submitting complaints about barking dogs or other noisy animals

People living in urban and suburban areas throughout King County and its cities can expect to live with some level of noise. Even rural areas can be impacted by noises. Traffic, neighborhood children, lawn mowers, construction, barking dogs or other animal noises are just a few examples. As a resident of any area you are expected to tolerate most of these noises, within reason, without complaint. However, with pet noises that are excessive or continuous, there is something you can do.

If the excessive or continuous noise is from a barking dog or other noisy animal, King County Animal Care and Control offers the following information for addressing the situation.

1. Communicate with the pet owner

First, speak with the owners of the pet about the problem. Do not wait until you are totally frustrated. Often, neighborly discussions can be very helpful. Let the pet owners know that you are disturbed by the noise. Sometimes pet owners are not aware of the problem or the impacts on other residents. Try to work out a mutually agreeable and reasonable solution in a neighborly manner. Offer suggestions or alternatives that will help reduce the disturbance during times of the day or night that you are bothered. Allow a reasonable time for a remedy by the pet owner. Also, make note of your contacts with the pet owner and responses you received, as we will want that documented in the packet we mail you (see below, #3.)

2. Submit a complaint

If you have tried to solve the problem through communications with the pet owner, and you continue to be disturbed by excessive animal

noise, and you have identified other neighbors that are also disturbed, Regional Animal Services of King County is prepared to assist you.

The first step is to file a complaint form. Please note that this complaint form does not replace the "petition" form we will also ask you to complete (see next section.) Both forms will assist us by providing the information we need.

There are different ways to submit a complaint form:

- Complaints about barking dogs or other nuisance animal noises can be submitted by calling 206-296-PETS (7387), extension 24. The phone hours are Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- Hard-copy complaints can be faxed to 206-205-8043, using the complaint form that can be found on the website, or at the end of this document.
- Or, you can mail the completed form to King County Animal Care and Control, 21615 - 64th Ave. S, Kent, WA 98032.

When you call to submit a complaint, please be prepared to provide the following information:

- Your (complainant) name, phone number and address.
- The name and address of the owner of the noisy animal.
- A description of the animal(s) causing the noise.
- A brief description of the problem. (We will ask you for more detailed description of the problem on the materials we mail you, see next section.)

When you call in a complaint, you will be provided with a Case Number. Write this number down and reference it on further communications with Regional Animal Services about this problem.

3. What Happens After a Complaint is Filed

After a complaint is filed, the following actions will occur:

We will mail you (the complainant) a form called a "petition." This form asks you to fill in the following

- A list or log of days and times that the animal noises are occurring.

- The sign-on of two other neighbors who are also bothered by the noise.
- A record of contacts with the pet owner and the responses.

After you complete the petition, we will mail the pet owner a letter, informing them that a complaint has been submitted, and stating that if their animals are making disturbing noises, they must take action to end the problem. The letter also states that a petition form has been mailed to the complaining party to document any continuing violation. We also mail the pet owner a brochure on ways to control nuisance barking.

4. Importance of Documentation

King County Code 11.04.230, paragraph J, defines the animal noise nuisance as: "any domestic animal which howls, yelps, whines or barks or makes other oral noises in such a manner as to disturb any person or neighborhood to an unreasonable degree." City ordinances enforced by Regional Animal Services of King County have similar language.

This ordinance language, regarding nuisance noise, is very general. Therefore, in order to show that a violation truly exists, proof is required to demonstrate that the noise is occurring to an "unreasonable" degree, and to provide a valid basis for Regional Animal Services enforcement action. That is why it is so important that you document the nature and the extent of the problem. If you can videotape the barking dog, do so.

For example, when multiple neighbors sign the petition form, it provides important evidence that the animal noise is unreasonable and not simply troubling one individual. Also, if documentation shows that you have logged extended periods of persistent noise, especially during night or early morning hours, that documentation can provide further evidence that a violation may be occurring.

Be thorough and honest in your documentation.

5. Follow up

Sometimes the animal owners will take some action to fix the problem once they have been notified by Animal Care and Control, and following conversations with neighbors who are bothered. Again, allow a reasonable time for the pet owner to implement a remedy.

If the Animal Care and Control letter and your neighborly communications do not address the problem, we will dispatch an Animal Care and Control officer to attempt contact with the pet owner. We will seek the animal owner's comments. The Animal Care and Control officer will provide education about techniques to control barking or other noises. If warranted, the Animal Care and Control officer will issue a warning.

6. What If the Noise Continues?

If the steps described above do not help to resolve the noise problem, additional escalating enforcement strategies can be pursued.

To submit an additional complaint, call again to 206-296-PETS, extension 24. Tell the operator the original case number. You will be given a new case number for the new complaint.

In order to escalate enforcement action, updated documentation of a continuing problem is necessary. Do not stop documenting the problem. Submit additional logs of the days and times of the animal noises. Ask the other neighbors to also submit statements of complaint. If you can videotape the dog barking, do so. Remember, if we do not hear from you, we do not know the problem may be continuing.

If evidence of continuing violation is submitted to Regional Animal Services of King County, an Animal Care and Control officer will be dispatched again to contact the pet owner. Depending on the circumstances, a second warning may be issued. Or, a civil Notice of Nuisance Abatement may be initiated, issuing a civil penalty (fine) for the continuing violation.

During this time, Regional Animal Services will also be continuing attempts to educate the pet owners about steps they can take to reduce the noises. Barking control collars can be effective, and there are various types of collars available. For example, one type comes with a small battery-operated device to emit a spray of citrus oil when barking occurs--painless but unpleasant. Eventually the dog learns not to bark to avoid the spray. Other strategies that may be explained to pet owners can include obedience training, changing the animals' routines, maintaining the animals inside, or providing them with more exercise.

Do not be discouraged by the time it may take to address animal noise problems, and continue documenting the noises and submitting the information to Regional Animal Services.

7. Releasing the identity of complainants

In most cases, information about a complaint, including the identities of the complainants, is considered a public record and is subject to release, upon request, under the provisions of the Washington State Public Disclosure Act, Chapter 42.17 RCW.

RCW 42.17.310(1)(e) says that "The following investigative, law enforcement and crime victim information is exempt from public inspection and copying under this chapter: (2) information revealing the identity of persons who are witnesses to or victims of crime or who file complaints with investigative, law enforcement, or penology agencies ... if disclosure would endanger any person's life, physical safety, or property. If at the time a complaint is filed the complainant, victim or witness indicates a desire for disclosure or nondisclosure, such desire shall govern."

8. Resolving the Problem

Regional Animal Services will continue to work on the noise disturbances as long as you and your neighbors continue to document the ongoing problems and submit the evidence to us. Animal Control officers generally are not able to witness/hear the noises, so the evidence needs to come from those impacted by the problem. As necessary, we will issue additional civil Notices of Nuisance Abatement orders with increasing levels of civil penalties (fines) until the problem is resolved.



King County

King County Records & Licensing Services Division

Office use only:

Case # _____

Stamp-in Date: _____

Regional Animal Services of King County Report of Complaint or Problem

- Options to submit:**
- **FAX** this form to 206.205.8043
 - **E-mail** completed form to pets@kingcounty.gov
 - **MAIL** this form to: King County Animal Care & Control
21615 – 64th Avenue South, Kent WA 98032
 - **CALL** 206.296.PETS [7387], ext. 24 (8:30-5:30 Mon-Fri)

Please print or write all information clearly:

Reporting Party's Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Alt _____

Animal Owner's Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Alt _____

Please describe the nature of the complaint or problem, with all pertinent information including dates, times of incident(s), location of violation(s) and names and phone numbers of witnesses. Attach additional pages if needed.

Date & time of incident: _____

Location of violation: _____

Description of animals involved: _____

Incident details: _____

I wish to remain anonymous because I fear that the disclosure of my identity may endanger my life, safety or property or that of others. Yes No or N/A I have read this statement and find it to be true and correct:

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____