

De-barking: Out of the closet for all the right reasons

I casually mentioned to a co-worker that I was taking a couple hours off from work for a vet appointment. She said she hoped nothing was wrong with any of my dogs. I told her everyone was fine, but I had recently taken back a male into my home because his owners had gotten a divorce and he had been the wife's dog and her job would now require her to travel internationally and she had no one to care for him. And because I have a lifetime responsibility to every dog that I have put in a pet home, my contract says that "if for any reason the time comes when you cannot keep this dog, it has to come back to me (the breeder)," this wonderful neutered boy came back into our family. After having this boy home for a couple months I was now taking him in to get de-barked. My co-worker's eyes got huge and she said, "Really? That can be done? How is it done and WHY would you do that? It sounds cruel." So I explained to her that ALL my min pins are debarked. Her eyes were still huge, so I explained further. This male is a really good boy. Good in the house, good with other dogs and I'm happy to have him back. But he is loud. Very, very loud. And my neighbors are very, very close. And this guy could make my neighbor's TV implode or crack crystal. And whether you have one or ten dogs, as a responsible pet owner I have to also take into consideration what is considerate for my neighbors and do what I have to, to ensure a long and happy life for my dogs.

ONE of the reasons I pay a mortgage is so that I can provide a comfortable and safe home for my dogs and they can enjoy quality time outside in a safe yard. My neighbors also deserve not to have their quality of life disrupted. I certainly do not want to spend my time yelling "shut-up" out the window. Yes, there are citronella collars, barker breaker collars, sonic sound emitters and shock collars. I've tried them all except the shock collars, and THAT ain't gonna happen. So for \$95 and a couple hours of my time, life is good for me, my neighbors, and the dog. I expect and want my dogs to go outside and play and chase each other and spend hours basking in the sun or shade. And yes, ALL the dogs can still bark, they just do not terrorize and disrupt the neighborhood. I much prefer the option to de-bark, rather than to have a neighbor or animal control tell me that I cannot keep a particular dog because it is causing a disturbance. That is how I was "backed into a corner" and had to do my first de-bark 8 years ago when I was living in an apartment. It was either move, get rid of the dog or control her noise. After a week of crying and being sick to my stomach over the thought of finding her a new home (where she would still bark and perhaps suffer punishment for doing so), another show person suggested I have her de-barked. I was horrified at the thought and cried some more. Then I thought, "no one is going to ever force me to get rid of one of my dogs" and I made some inquiries and cried some more and had it done. My stress level dropped 1000%. Life at home became wonderful. Within 6 months I had all the other dogs done. It is a small price to pay to be able to keep all my dogs, maintain my purebred permit and be a good neighbor.

Do all min pins need to be debarked? No, certainly not. But I cannot help but wonder how many dogs (of any breed) end up in shelters or breed rescue because their owners cannot control the noise. Wonderful dogs who are loved and cared for by their owners, but due to their loud mouth, they cause problems with the neighbors and their owners find it easier to give up their dog because they do not know that there is another option out there for them. So I am going to explain this procedure for you. Not all vets do this procedure, either because of personal reasons or because they do not know how.

I have stood and watched this done on each of my dogs, with no problem. Quite simply, the vocal cords are altered. The vocal cords are like little parenthesis on either side of the throat) (and the dog gets a pre-op shot and is put under a gas anesthesia, then the cords are notched or have pieces snipped out of them. There is no blood, the dog comes out of the anesthesia right away and after 20 minutes can walk to the car. Yes the throat is a little sore for a day so I feed scrambled eggs w/canned food that first day, and try to keep the dog in a quiet environment for the first week

to limit their barking activity while the throat heals. This prevents scarring that would cause the loud bark to come back in time. My guy came home that day and never missed a beat. And it was done with all necessary precautions by a competent veterinarian.

This is a responsible action on my part, that makes me a better owner and neighbor than the person on the street behind me, who leaves their dog out 24/7 to bark or turns their dog/cat loose to run the streets.

Will everyone who reads this agree with me? Probably not. But there are people who abuse all aspects of animal ownership. Sadly, it is too easy for people to just "get rid" of their pet because they do not know that there is another humane alternative out there that would allow them to keep their pet. For this reason also I support spaying and neutering pets and the indiscriminate breeding that flood our shelters and rescue programs. De-barking and ear cropping are elective surgeries. And I have the right to choose to have either of those procedures done. There are those who would try to take this right of choice away from me and you. I own dogs, and I vote.

For more information about Miniature Pinschers please visit our MPCA website at www.minpin.org.
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