



# VETERINARY SURGEONS BOARD OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

## CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE BARK REDUCTION OF DOGS

*This Code recognises that bark reduction may be necessary for therapeutic or prophylactic effects or as an alternative to euthanasia for a dog which barks persistently. This Code does not approve of bark reduction as a substitute for proper care, management and training of a dog. The owner of the dog must recognize that persistent barking is a behaviour problem, and the cause of the problem will not be addressed by this surgical procedure. Dog owners are encouraged to seek professional help to address the cause of the problem. When management changes and training are undertaken, sufficient time must always be allowed for behaviour changes in a dog to be evident.*

### 1. PURPOSE OF THE CODE:

This Code aims to protect the welfare of dogs from indiscriminate surgical procedures to reduce barking and encourage considerate management of dogs. This Code is complementary to and should be read in conjunction with relevant sections of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1985 and Regulations.

### 2. MEANING OF BARK REDUCTION:

For the purposes of this Code 'bark reduction' means the surgical operation performed by a veterinary surgeon to reduce the noise of a dog's bark. After this procedure such dogs will usually have a reduced ability to vocalise, often with a "husky" bark which may be audible up to 20 metres.

### 3. CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH A DOG MAY UNDERGO BARK REDUCTION:

a) The owner must demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to discourage the dog from barking by considerate care, training and management of the dog. This will include such measures as:-

- i. appropriate obedience training by a recognised body;
- ii. consultation with an animal behaviourist, and
- iii. use of humane bark reduction aids.

*The onus is on the owner to demonstrate to the veterinary surgeon that the problem has been ongoing for a significant period; that consistent, ongoing and genuine attempts have been made to appropriately address the cause of the problem; and that a range of options have been tried.*

b) There have been written complaints from two or more neighbouring residences, submitted to the local Council and training & management options have been pursued by the owner, or

c) It is the opinion of an authorised Local Government Dog Management Officer that all other avenues have been pursued and bark reduction is a last resort to removal of the dog or euthanasia.

### 4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OWNER IN THE CASE OF A DOG WHICH BARKS EXCESSIVELY:

An owner, or their agent, who intends to have a dog bark reduced must first complete the attached Statutory Declaration to demonstrate that they have taken reasonable steps to reduce the problem, as outlined in this Code. A model declaration is attached.

### 5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VETERINARY SURGEON:

A veterinary surgeon who has surgically reduced the bark of a dog is required to maintain records of the operation for a period of seven years and be prepared to supply information to the Veterinary Surgeons Board or the Office of Animal Welfare on request.

Before agreeing to perform a bark reduction operation, the veterinary surgeon must consider the history and physical condition of the dog and arrangements for post-operative care and management. If the welfare of a dog after bark reduction is jeopardised, the dog must not undergo the surgery. If, it is in the veterinary surgeon's professional judgement that bark reduction is inappropriate in a specific case, the owner must be encouraged to arrange rehousing or euthanasia of the dog.

The veterinary surgeon must advise the owner or the person-in-charge of the appropriate care and management of a dog which has been barked reduced. It may not be necessary to completely separate a bark reduced dog from other dogs but care must always be taken soon after the operation or with dogs that are unfamiliar to the bark reduced dog.



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## CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE BARK REDUCTION OF DOGS: SAMPLE FORM

### PRACTICE NAME

### OWNER'S STATUTORY DECLARATION FOR BARK REDUCTION IN A DOG

To be completed and presented to the Veterinary Surgeon who it is intended will surgically bark reduce the dog.

All sections are to be completed and the document is to be witnessed by a Justice of the Peace or the Commissioner for taking Affidavits in the Supreme Court of South Australia.

I .....  
Full Name (printed)

Of .....  
Address (printed)

**do solemnly and sincerely declare that:-**

1. I am the owner of a .....  
Age, Breed & Description of dog

Dog named ..... Registration number .....  
in the Council Of .....

2. I request that the above dog be bark reduced by a surgical operation because it barks persistently.

3. I have made every reasonable effort to discourage the dog from so barking by considerate care, obedience training and the use of humane bark reduction aids.

I recognize that persistent barking is a behavioural problem, and that debarking does not reduce the dog's anxiety because it does not alter the problem, only the symptom.

The methods that I have used to attempt to alter the dogs behaviour are as follows (give details):

Obedience classes attended (where, length of time):

Animal Behaviourists consulted:

Devices used:

5. I have read carefully and understand the purport of the Code of Practice for Bark Reduction in Dogs.

I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the Oaths Act, 1936

DECLARED AND SUBSCRIBED at .....

By ..... Owner's Full Name (printed)  
This ..... day of ..... 20 .....

Before me: .....  
J.P. or Commissioner for taking Affidavits in the Supreme Court of South Australia  
(signature, official stamp & number included):