

DOGS AND FENCE FIGHTING

WHAT IT IS

Dogs who run the fence line while barking often draw complaints from their pet parents. At best, these dogs are being noisy, and at worst, they get so revved up that they may bite a person or animal on the other side of the fence or a person or other dog in the same yard with them.

It is relatively common for dogs to run the fence line; however, it can be highly disruptive to neighbors, and it is not a mentally healthy activity for the dog. Additionally, the behavior can result in harm to another person or animal.

WHAT TO DO

Dogs left alone in the yard are likely to bark and possibly fence fight. Training will help your dog control these behaviors. Work with your dog on manners and tricks and then supervise your dog in the yard so that you can reward the behavior you want repeated. When people and other animals pass by, play games with your dog and try to focus his attention on you instead of obsessing about what's going on outside your yard.

Teach a solid recall. It takes a lot of practice, but eventually you will be able to call your dog to you if and when he becomes too excited and stimulated. YouTube has a great video "Clicker Training: Bacon Recall (come when called)" which demonstrates steps to develop a solid recall.

GET CRAFTY!

If you want to briefly leave your dog unattended in your yard without giving him the opportunity to practice fence fighting behavior, you will need to limit his ability to see what is going on outside of your fence. This can be accomplished with basic items from the hardware store. Depending on the style of your fence, you can use opaque plastic panels or sheets, staples, or zip ties.

NOT RECOMMENDED

We do not recommend the use of aversive sound collars or electric collars for dogs who fence fight. These collars deliver a high-frequency sound that is uncomfortable to dogs or an electric shock that is painful. These collars have unintended side effects, as the dog may not understand the connection between the punishment and his barking and may begin to associate people or other animals with pain and discomfort. This can exacerbate behavior problems or cause new ones.