



Surgical Debarking

Association of Professional Dog Trainers Position Statement

The following statement reflects the opinion of the Association of Professional Dog Trainers.

New Jersey recently joined the growing list of state and local jurisdictions that have introduced and/or passed legislation prohibiting the surgical debarking of dogs. The New Jersey measure (A-1586) will allow surgical silencing to be performed by a veterinarian only in cases to protect the life or health of a dog. Government interest in debarking rises from the belief that the surgical technique has been employed for criminal purposes to silence attack dogs so they will not bark and warn their intended victims.

APDT's interest in debarking rises from a behavioral foundation, not a criminal one.

The APDT recognizes that dogs bark for a reason, frequently because they are bored, lonely, threatened, or otherwise distressed. Debarking silences the dog without addressing the environmental issues that are causing the stress and the barking. The owner then has less reason to be aware of the environmental stressors, and little or no motivation to reduce or correct them, thus leaving the dog still distressed, but silent.

Therefore, the APDT encourages the implementation of dog-friendly behavioral solutions to barking problems, and is opposed to the debarking of dogs except as a last resort and unless and until all appropriate behavioral solutions have been explored and exhausted.

APDT Board of Trustees

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