

Excessive barker goes hoarse

Written by By Sam Mazzota King Syndicate
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DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My little dog Barnsey is quite a barker for a terrier, but for the past several days his bark has been very hoarse. He sometimes snorts or sneezes, too. I make sure he has plenty of water, but I'm not sure what else to do. It doesn't seem to be getting better. — Faye H., Hartford, Connecticut

DEAR FAYE: This is a perfect time to take Barnsey to the vet. Chronic hoarseness when barking can have several different causes, and the veterinarian can better evaluate him to see what's happening.

I'll go over some of the reasons for a barker suddenly getting hoarse. Laryngitis is a common diagnosis, but it's important to figure out the cause. A bacterial or viral infection may be the culprit, or gastroesophageal reflux (where stomach acid flows up into the esophageal tract, causing irritation and inflammation).

Less common causes are masses or tumors growing on or near the dog's larynx, or other conditions affecting the larynx. These may require surgery, and the vet will discuss this option with you.

The vet will evaluate Barnsey to see if he has an infection, acid reflux, or if the hoarse barking has another cause. They'll then be able to recommend an effective treatment. For example, a bacterial infection would likely be treated with antibiotics. A viral infection has to run its course, but Barnsey would be treated with medications to make him comfortable and reduce inflammation.

If acid reflux is the suspected culprit, the vet may recommend changes to his feeding schedule and the amount of food at each meal. You can also try different varieties of dog food.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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