



# **BULLDOG CLUB OF AMERICA**

## **Position Statement**

### **DEBARKING**

Debarking, referred to more properly as Bark Softening, is a viable veterinary procedure that may allow a dog owner to keep a dog that barks excessively in its loving home. Debarking, more properly called bark softening, reduces, but does not eliminate, the sound level of the dog's bark. The dog can still make itself heard, but the sound will not carry far to annoy neighbors. After other behavioral modification efforts to correct excessive barking have failed, only a qualified, licensed veterinarian should perform bark softening. As with other veterinary medical decisions, the decision to soften the bark of a dog is best left to individual owners and their veterinarians as part of the veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

BCA recognizes that owners have to juggle difficult decisions regarding the care of their animals. Although Bulldogs are not a breed that is frequently subject to bark softening, it is in the better interest of a dog to have its bark softened rather than for a beloved family pet to be relinquished to a shelter, or to euthanize otherwise healthy dog.

Bark Softening is a commonly misunderstood practice. When performed by a skilled veterinarian, bark softening is an acceptable veterinary procedure that is often done as a "last resort" when all other methods of modifying a dog's behavior have failed.

For many responsible dog owners, bark softening is the only alternative to euthanizing or surrendering their canine companion to a local shelter when their pet's noisy behavior continually disturbs the community, violating nuisance laws. Debarked dogs can still broadcast the approach of strangers, express their glee when family members come home, and announce their presence at the local dog park. They also get to stay in their homes even if they are persistent barkers. Bark softening surgery reduces the amount of tissue in the vocal chords and limits the volume, but not the amount, of the barking. The decision to debark a dog is one that is best left to the dog owner and his/her veterinarian as part of the veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

BCA urges veterinary schools to train veterinarians in the latest techniques in bark softening so they can continue to provide this valuable service to their clients' dogs. BCA supports the rights of owners working with their veterinarians to choose debarking as a management tool that will allow dogs to remain in their homes and will give breeders of noisy breeds the flexibility to develop viable breeding programs.