



## How to Celebrate ‘Thank A Mail Carrier Day’ 2019 – With Your Dog!

February 1, 2019

**Thank A Mail Carrier Day is celebrated on Monday February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The day is your chance to say thanks to your letter carrier.**

Simple enough, but what if your “thank you” is drowned out by a dog barking at your letter carrier? I sat down with one of our resident dog trainers to find out. Meet my co-worker [Caitly Chutuk](#), who works in our Customer Service Department, and has a dog training background in body language and behavior work. Here are some tips on squelching front door barking and why dogs seem to dislike mail delivery people so much.

Use the share links at the top of this post or leave a comment down below – we’d love to hear from you!

**The Honest Kitchen: Why do dogs stand by the front door and bark at people or other dogs?**

**Caitly Chutuk:** As dogs were domesticated to be humans’ best friends, we selected the traits that we wanted the most from our dogs. One of which is standing guard and alerting us to potential

dangers. The easiest way for a dog to get our attention and alert us to a potential problem is to bark. Dogs bark at the door to alert us to something outside the norm – they see a person approaching, there is a squirrel in the yard, they hear an unusual noise, etc. They aren't doing it to be a nuisance, quite the opposite, they are trying to alert us to something they feel needs our attention.

Also, barking at passing people and dogs is a self-rewarding behavior. Let's say there is a person walking their dog past your house. Your dog sees the walking duo passing and starts to bark. The duo keeps going, as they were already planning to do, and makes it out of view. What your dog just learned is that when they bark, the potential threat went away. Therefore barking = stranger goes away. Why wouldn't they continue to bark to ward away potential threats?

### **THK: Why do dogs seem to dislike mail carriers/people in uniform more than others?**

**CC:** Dogs aren't born with a hatred for postal carriers. They are, however, born with instincts that tell them to protect the property and alert of potential threats. This results in barking when there is someone nearing their home, to make their humans aware that someone is approaching. Mail carriers just stop by our homes for a brief moment, to deliver our mail. Your dog gets to practice that self-rewarding behavior with your mail carrier every day – bark at approaching human, human goes away.

### **THK: If someone's dog barks at people approaching the door, what is something they can do to alleviate the problem?**

**CC:** The first thing to understand is that this is your dog's natural instinct. You should also understand that dogs bark at the door for a variety of reasons. Commonly it's an alert-response, but it can also be fear, frustration, excitement, and a myriad of other things. I would recommend contacting a local positive-reinforcement based dog trainer in your area to help diagnose what the reason behind your dog's barking is first, and then come up with a plan to address the behavior and teach your dog a different behavior in response to approaching people. The CPDT website can be a great resource to find a certified trainer in your area: <http://www.ccpdt.org/>

### **THK: Is professional dog training necessary?**

**CC:** Anytime your dog is displaying a behavior that you find concerning or unwelcome, a professional dog trainer is the best resource to help address the issue. I recommend looking for a trainer that has an understanding in reading canine body language and addressing behavior concerns with positive, rewards-based training techniques. They should be able to help you diagnose the underlying cause for the behavior and help you and your dog move past that together.

### **Conclusion**

We hope you have a better understanding of why dogs bark at people walking by or coming up to your residence. If you are looking to work with your dog on their behavior when this occurs, we recommend looking into a certified trainer in your area, with the CPDT [website](#) being a great resource.

### **Fun Fact**

Historians believe that people were hired to deliver royal letters and decrees as early as 2000 BC. The oldest recorded postal document is from Egypt and dates back to 255 BC.