

Could Be a Very Noisy Sign of Love – And Perhaps She's Calling You Home

You may consider Fido angry, defiant or showing disrespect when he does this. But it might actually be a sign of how much yearning he has in his heart for you. So curb your frustration while you try to discern whether it's actually this sign of love.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dogs sometimes howl, and it may have something to do with a latent connection to wolves or other feral dogs in their ancestry
- Sometimes dogs howl as a sign of solidarity with other dogs in the neighborhood (or their perceived community), but it can also be a heads up — both to other dogs and humans — that something's not right
- It's been suggested that dogs may sometimes howl for the sheer joy of it. Singing is often an expression of deep emotion, and dogs have their share, whether it's nervousness, loneliness or contentment
- Just as other dogs bark, dogs sometimes howl when they know someone's in danger, even if it's themselves
- Some dog breeds, especially hunting breeds, are more prone to howling than others

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If you think you're the only person who's fallen into bed after a long, hard day for some blissful shut-eye, only to be awakened by the neighbor dog howling the night away, you're certainly not. Perhaps it was your own dog. Either way, perhaps unhappy reminders of the lateness of the hour out the window probably made matters worse.

Whether you own one of these vocal dogs or someone close to you does, you've got to wonder why they do that. Are they really howling at the moon? Are they lonely? Trying to get attention? Calling all howlers?

It's kind of funny, actually, when you hear some dog in your neighborhood start howling in the distance, and within a few minutes, more and more neighbor dogs take up the chorus. It's best to keep a sense of humor about it, though, even as you wonder what in the world drives them to it.

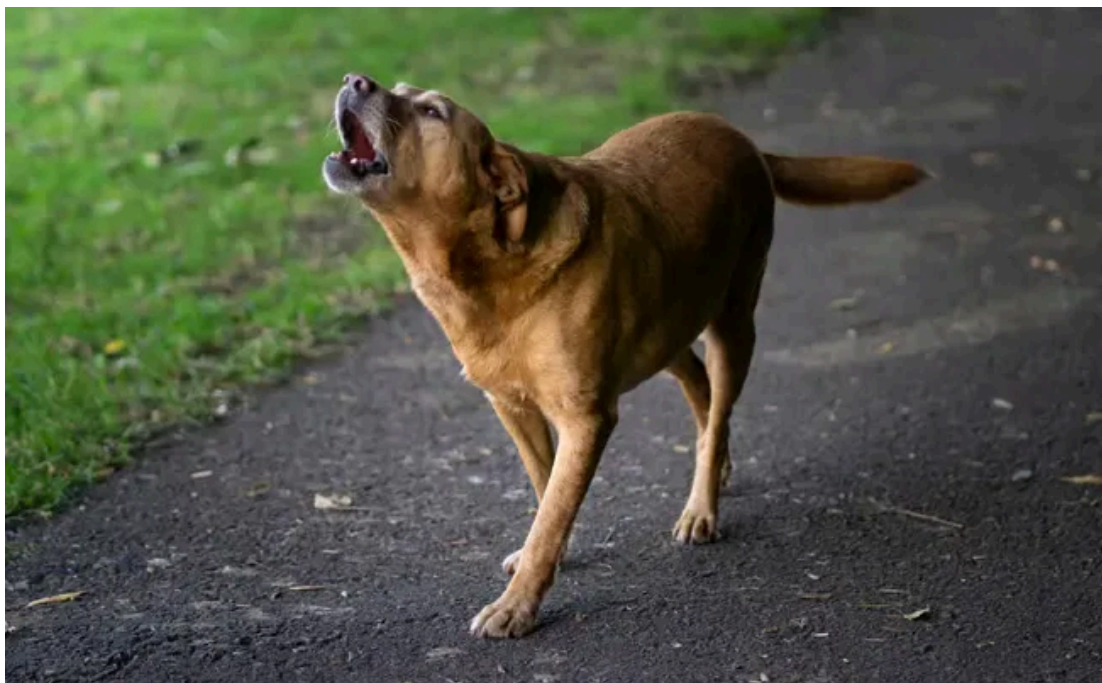
Some scientists believe it has something to do with genetics. Many dogs, while they may not have the appearance, have a stitch of wolf blood in them. In fact, the most ancient dog breeds do tend to have a long-past filial relationship to wolves, and if you've ever met a wolf for yourself, they certainly know how to howl. It may also involve communication. At any rate, below are five reasons why dogs howl.

1. **To organize their posse (aka community) as a homing beacon**



Feral dogs and wolves in the wild have an interesting communication system after a hunt. According to Dogster,¹ they howl to call scouts back to the pack. Those remaining with the pack howl as a sort of homing device so the scouts can join up with them again. Pet dogs sometimes have a similar way of expressing themselves, especially if their humans have been gone all day, or even longer. They howl to remind their favorite people where home is.

2. To indicate boundary lines and as defense mechanism



Like canine-style "king of the mountain," dogs howl to announce to other dogs that "this spot's been taken." In case an unknown dog ventures into their space, it's a heads-up to other dogs in the community. Some dogs take the warning more seriously than others, as the howl also denotes a threat, Dogster explains, adding:

*"In this context, dog howling functions as a defense mechanism, warding off potential predators and ensuring the safety of the dogs in the pack. In a domestic setting, like your home, dogs may howl for the same reason. Some dogs bark, others howl when a stranger comes to the door or a new car pulls up in the driveway."*²

3. To attract attention or express anxiety



Dogs get lonely sometimes, just like people do, and they may express their feelings by howling. You could call it emotional manipulation, and some dog owners are well aware their dog is capable of such shenanigans. It's rather endearing, actually (but perhaps not to the neighbors).

If Princess is experiencing **separation anxiety**, make sure she has a peaceful radio station to listen to, treat-release toys to play with and a comfortable place to nap. And when you're with her, spend plenty of time playing with her, rigorous exercise and cuddle time, letting her know she's important to you. Beyond that, in time and with maturity and appropriate management, your dog may grow out of it, but if not, you may need to chat with your veterinarian.

Then again, the howling may be a heads-up to the humans that something's not right — from the dog's perspective, anyway. Some dog owners know their dogs well enough to pay attention when their pup howls an alert. But like the boy who cried wolf, there are also dogs who howl just for attention, so if you go running every time he starts in, you're probably reinforcing that behavior.

4. **In response to stimuli and bonding exercises**



Environmental triggers such as police or ambulance sirens may set your dog off, and you may notice that as soon as the irritating sounds fade away, he'll stop howling. If your dog hears other dogs being touched off by such background noises, even if he may not do it on his own, howls of other dogs may be a sort of watchword. Experts think it may have something to do with boding with other dogs. Solidarity, as it were.

Other sounds might start the howling to set in, such as certain tones in music or loud volumes, whether a

voice, a violin or a saxophone, live or from the TV, car stereo or even a storm. The can opener or electric mixer might do it, too, and you might want to disconnect the buzzer on your dryer.

5. **To alert you to injury or discovery**



Similar to Lassie alerting the humans that Timmy had fallen into the well, dogs sometimes howl, just as other dogs bark, when they know someone's in danger, even if it's themselves. And like humans who cry, dogs howl when they're in distress or pain.

Dogs bred for hunting will often howl when they're chasing something, when the pursuit becomes dangerous, or when they've cornered another animal (you have to hope it's not a skunk). They've sometimes been trained to howl to show where they are.

If Your Pup's a Howler, She Might Be Just Singing

Dogster suggests that, rather than signifying a warning, sadness or irritation, perhaps your dog is howling for joy. Most singing is an expression of deep emotion, and dogs have their share, whether it's nervousness, loneliness or contentment.

But again, wolves are known for howling, and when a canine has a little wolf blood in him, the propensity that he or she may have been born with may come out! Some dog breeds, especially hunting breeds, are more prone to howling than others, according to a list on Dogster.com, including:

- Dachshunds
- Tamaskan dogs
- Coonhounds (Redbone, Black and Tan, Bluetick, Redtick, English and Treeing Walker)
- Native American Indian dogs
- Hounds (Blood and Bassett)
- Alaskan Malamutes
- Beagles
- American Eskimo dogs
- Huskies (Alaskan and **Siberian**)
- Foxhounds (American and English)

This list is not comprehensive, and it's impossible to say how many combinations of breeds there are who, with a little urging, might get a howl on at some time or other.

Sources and References

^{1,2} [Dogster](#), March 10, 2025
