

Good morning all. Thank you so much for your time.

“Our story about barking dogs”

Let me introduce us. My name is Lori Brann and I live with my significant other, Brian Merrill.

We live in the foothills of Western Maine in a little rural town called Brownfield. Brian was born here, and has lived in Brownfield most his life. I moved here from central Maine back in 2008. We live on Blueberry Ln, in a small subdivision here in town. The house is set on +/- 2 acres as do most of the rest of the homes here. We have 2 neighbors beyond us, one on the left and one at the very end of the road. Sounds perfect, right?

Let's jump ahead to 2021. Our once quiet little neighborhood has become a nightmare of barking dogs and dogs running around our yards day and night loose. The neighbor at the end of the road allows his dogs to continuously bark, sometimes for an hour or more without intervening. This barking goes on day and night, a lot of times, making it difficult to sleep and difficult to enjoy our property that we call home.

We have tried going through proper channels with this issue. We have called our Animal Control Officer (ACO), Oxford County Sheriff's Department, the State of Maine's Animal Welfare Department, Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (Maine State Game Wardens), and, we have gone to our Select Board here in town. We've also gone to our state representatives, both past and present, trying to find a resolution to our ongoing noise annoyance issue. No one has been able to help us.

The last thing we were told, by our town's ACO was that the home at the end of our subdivision is a “farm” and that the dogs are guardian dogs so they are exempt from barking ordinances, period, so there's nothing that can be done. We both know what a working farm looks like. Brian's grandparents had a farm and I used to help on a dairy farm when I was a kid. Really? He does not own “herding or guardian” dogs, he owns 14 dogs that “hunt.” Plot hounds, beagles, bear dogs, etc. If you set a hunting dog loose in a field housing 2 calves what will they do? Will they stay around and protect those animals or will they put their noses to the ground and be gone in just a matter of minutes?! We can tell you, because every time one of his so-called guardian dogs gets loose, you can hear it baying as it's running through the woods behind our house. It's one thing to have TRUE herding/guardian dogs. It's quite another to just “say” they are!

We believe everyone is entitled to enjoy their own property as they see fit, as long as it does not interfere with their neighbors' quality of life. We are no longer able to enjoy our property that we've loved and groomed over the past almost 20 years now. People say that he's been there 25 years as a farm. That is incorrect. This modular home has only been there since +/- 2004 and has not always had animals there. In fact, shortly after we moved here in 2008 I don't believe we heard any. Not to say they didn't have any dogs, just that we didn't hear them like we do now.

The neighbors beyond us, across the street, have had enough of this constant incessant barking and have decided to sell their home to get away from it. There have been 3 different owners in this home over the past 15 yrs.

It's so sad that someone who is on total disability, trailers a boat to the lake to go fishing, hunts turkeys, deer, rabbits, hunts bear & cats with his dogs, etc., can disrupt the lives of those people who go to work every day, volunteer their time as firefighters, and do the right thing.

People always tell you, do things right, go through the proper channels to get a resolution, don't take things into your own hands. We have tried and tried again to no avail. We are feeling very frustrated.

Long story short...we just want to be able to enjoy our property with some peace & quiet.

We realize dogs will bark. We too have a dog.

If he barks, we investigate right away and make quiet him or bring him inside. That's what we expect our neighbors to do also. Not let them bark anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours. Have some common sense. That is all we are asking.

Thank you.