



CRATE TRAINING

WHAT IS A DOG CRATE?

A dog crate is a rectangular enclosure with a top and a door, made in a variety of sizes proportioned to fit any type of dog. Constructed of wire, wood, metal or molded fiberglass/plastic, its purpose is to provide guaranteed confinement for reasons of security, safety, housebreaking, protection of household goods, travel, illness, or just general control.

CRUELTY OR KINDNESS?

If your first reaction to using a crate is one of hesitation, you are a typical pet owner. As a reasoning human being, you really value your freedom. Since you consider your pet an extension of the human family, it's only natural to feel that closing him/her in a crate would probably cause your pet to resent you, but as the dog sees it, the crate serves as a secure, private place. It helps to satisfy the "den instinct", a place where your pet can feel safe.

WHY USE A CRATE?

You can:

- Enjoy peace of mind when leaving your dog home alone, knowing that nothing can be soiled or destroyed and that your dog is comfortable, protected and not developing bad habits.
- Housebreak your dog more quickly by using the close confinement to encourage control, to establish a regular routine for outdoor elimination and to prevent "accidents" at night or when left alone.
- Effectively confine your dog at times when he/she may be underfoot (meals, family activities), unwelcome (guests, workers), overexcited and/or bothered by too much confusion or too many children, or ill.
- Travel with your dog with less risk of the driver distraction or the dog getting loose and hopelessly lost, and with the assurance that he/she can easily adapt to strange surroundings as long as you have brought this familiar "security blanket" along.

Your dog can:

- Enjoy the privacy and security of his/her own "den" to which he can retreat when tired, stressed or ill.
- Avoid much of the fear, confusion and/or punishment caused by your reactions to problem behavior.
- More easily learn to control his/her bowels and to associate elimination only with the outdoors or designated locations.
- Be included in family outings, visits and trips instead of being left behind alone at home or in a boarding kennel.

WHAT SIZE SHOULD A CRATE BE?

A crate should always be large enough to permit any age dog to stretch out flat on his/her side without being cramped, and to sit up without hitting the top of the head. For a fully-grown dog, measure the distance from its nose to the base of the tail and use a crate close to, but not less than this length. For a puppy, measure as above, then add 12 inches for anticipated rapid growth. If a small crate is unavailable for temporary use, reduce the space of an adult size one with a box or a moveable partition. Increase the space inside the crate as the puppy grows so that he remains comfortable. Remember that *a crate too large for a young puppy defeats its purpose of providing security and promoting bowel control*, so the space inside the crate should always be limited in the beginning.

WHERE SHOULD I PUT THE CRATE?

Since one of the main reasons for using a crate is to confine a dog without making him/her feel isolated or banished, the crate should be placed in, or as close as possible to, a "people" area - kitchen, family room, etc. Avoid drafty areas or those very close to a heat source.

CRATING THE PUPPY

A young puppy (<16 weeks) should normally have no problem accepting a crate as his "own place". For bedding, use an old towel or piece of a blanket, which can be washed, and some freshly worn article of clothing such as an old T-shirt. While you should always provide access to fresh water, it is best to make the bowl as stationary as possible to avoid frequent spills. Make it clear to children that the crate is not a playhouse for them, but rather a special room for the puppy, whose needs should be recognized and respected. You should, however, accustom the dog from the start to let you reach into the crate at any time, lest he become overprotective of it.

Establish a "crate routine" immediately, closing the puppy in at regular 1-2 hour intervals during the day (his/her own chosen nap times will guide you) and whenever the dog must be left alone. Give the dog chew toys for distraction, but be sure to remove collar and tags, which could become caught in the opening. At night, after sufficient walk and exercise, close the puppy in the crate. Initially you may want to put in a hot water bottle or a wind up clock if the puppy seems restless.

If you do not choose, or are not able to use the crate permanently, plan to use it for at least 5-6 months or until the dog is well past the teething phase; then start leaving the crate door open at night, when someone is home during the day, or when left alone for brief periods. If all goes well for a week or two and the dog seems reliable when left alone, you now have the option of leaving the crate in its place or removing the crate and leaving his/her bedding in the same spot. Should any problem behavior occur at a future time, however, the decision whether or not to use a crate will probably have been made for you. Even after a long period without a crate, a dog which has been raised in one will often readily accept it again should the need arise.

In summary, using a crate may be helpful not only for housetraining your dog, but often will provide your dog with a safe and secure environment as well. As always, if you have any questions please feel free to contact the Drs. or staff.