



Crate training

We all need a special place to call our own, and your pet is no different! Part of raising a healthy dog is providing her with a “safe haven,” and crates are a perfect solution. Most dogs can be easily trained to enjoy spending time in their crates. Crate training is neither cruel nor unfair, provided your puppy has sufficient social interaction, exercise, and has an opportunity to eliminate before he/she is placed in the crate. In fact, allowing your dog to wander through the home unsupervised to investigate, chew and eliminate can be potentially dangerous (and lead to foreign body ingestion and/or surgery, etc).

There are numerous benefits to crate training your dog:

- Security for your dog
- Safety for your dog
- Prevention of household damage (chewing, eliminating, etc)
- Help with housetraining
- Preparation for travel, boarding and spending time alone
- Improved relationships (fewer problems means less frustration and discipline)

How to Choose a Crate

Two basic styles of crates exist; metal collapsible crates with tray floors and plastic traveling crates. Look for one that is large enough for your dog to stand up and turn around in – even when they are full grown. Provide the type of bedding on which your dog likes to nap, but keep in mind that your pup might be less likely to chew flat, tightly woven carpet samples/remnants than they are blankets or towels. If your dog must be left along for more than four hours at a time, consider a pen or dog-proofed room for confinement, or an exercise pen that allows a little more room to move about. Also, consider a midday visit from a dog walker.

Because dogs are social, the ideal location for the crate is in a room where your family spends a lot of time, such as the kitchen, den or bedroom. A radio, TV or CD may help to calm your dog and mask noises that may trigger barking. Finally, for the crate to remain a positive, enjoyable retreat, never use it for punishment.



Training Puppies

Introduce your puppy to the crate as soon as possible. Place treats, toys, chews, or food in the crate to motivate him/her voluntarily. You can teach them to go into the crate on command at feeding time or when given a chew toy. Practice frequently by tossing pieces of kibble in the crate. Each time they run inside, say “go to your crate.” Eventually they will learn to enter when you give the command and point to the crate.

The first confinement session should be after a period of play, exercise, and elimination (when they are ready to take a nap or quietly play with a toy). Place your puppy in the crate with a treat and a toy and close the door. Leave the room but remain close enough to hear them. You can expect some distress the first few times your puppy is separated from family members. Never reward the puppy by letting them out when they cry or whine. Instead, ignore them until the crying stops and release them before it starts again.

As crate training continues, be sure to give her a favored chew toy or food-dispensing toy when placing them in the crate so they have something to keep occupied. Gradually increase the amount of time your pet spends in the crate. However, be certain to return and release your pup before they need to eliminate.

Remember to wait until your dog is quiet before you release them from the crate. If they continue to vocalize, try interrupting the behavior with a command or loud noise. The disruptions should be strong enough to stop the barking, but do not repeat them if they are not immediately successful or cause excessive fear.

Training Adult Dogs

Training adult dogs is similar to training puppies, except that the introduction period should be much longer. Introduce your dog to the crate by setting it up in the feeding or sleeping area with the door open. Close the door to the room or use a baby gate to keep the pet in the room. Place food, treats, and toys in the crate so your dog is encouraged to enter on their own. Add comfortable bedding so she/he is likely to stay inside and rest. Once they enter the crate freely, you can begin to close the door for short periods of time. Some dogs adapt more quickly if you have crates available in more than one area of the home where the family spends time.

Some dogs do not deal well with confinement. These are usually the pets that have not been properly trained, older pets that are used to more freedom, or pets with anxiety disorders. If your pet panics each time they are placed in the crate with signs of drooling, destructive escape behaviors, biting the crate (hard enough to break teeth), anxious vocalizations or eliminations, stop using the crate and consult with your veterinarian.