

# Crate Training Basics

## **Guidelines for Crate Training Your Puppy**

Providing your puppy with a crate provides a safe area and gives the puppy a sense of security as it simulates a den. It is a very effective housebreaking tool because it takes advantage of the dog's natural instinct not to soil its sleeping place. It can also help to reduce separation anxiety, prevents destructive behavior (such as chewing furniture), and keeps a puppy away from potentially dangerous household items (i.e., poisons, electrical wires, etc.). It makes it easier to travel with your dog. They will be better house and hotel guests if they can be quietly crated. It will provide them with a familiar place to rest and sleep. A crate should NEVER be used for the purpose of punishment.

## **What Size/Style of Crate?**

You should use a crate that is just big enough for your puppy to stand, turn around and lay down in. You don't want it too small or it will be uncomfortable, nor do you want it so big that the puppy can go to the other end and soil the crate. The ideal situation is to increase the size of the crate as your puppy grows. Many of the bigger wire crates come with a divider that allows you to adjust the size of the crate as needed. Once full grown the divider can be removed.

## **Furnishing Your Puppy's Crate**

Place your puppy's favorite toys and dog treats at the far end opposite the door opening. Toys and balls should always be inedible and large enough to prevent them from being swallowed. Any fragmented toys should be removed to prevent choking and internal obstruction. You may also place a sterilized marrow bone filled with cheese or dog treats in the crate. "Kongs" stuffed with cookies are great management tools for crate training and occupying your dog any time.

Place a towel or blanket inside the crate to create a soft, comfortable bed for the puppy. If the puppy chews the towel, remove it to prevent the pup from swallowing or choking on the pieces. Although most puppies prefer lying on soft bedding, some may prefer to rest on a hard, flat surface, and may push the towel to one end of the crate to avoid it. If the puppy urinates on the towel, remove bedding until the pup no longer eliminates in the crate.

## **Location of Crate**

Whenever possible, place the crate near or next to you when you are home. This will encourage the pup to go inside and get used to his crate and will help prevent him feeling lonely or isolated when you go out. A central room in the home (i.e.: living room or kitchen) or a large hallway near the entrance is a good place to crate your puppy.

## Introducing the Crate to Your Puppy

It is important that your puppy have a good association with the crate. The following gives some helpful guidelines to introduce your puppy to their new home:

1. Occasionally throughout the day, drop small treats in the crate. While investigating his new crate, the pup will discover the treats, thereby reinforcing a positive association with the crate. You should also feed your puppy in the crate to create the same effect.
2. In the beginning, praise and pet your pup when he enters. Do not try to push, pull or force the puppy into the crate. When it is time for bed, you may need to place your pup in his crate and shut the door upon retiring. Some good choices for crate location through the night are next to your bed, in the kitchen, bathroom or living room. No matter where you place the crate, it should be close enough for you to hear stirring or crying in case the puppy needs to go outside.
3. It is advisable to crate your pup for short periods of time while you are home. In fact, crate training is best accomplished while you are in the room with your dog. Getting him used to your absence from the room in which he is crated is a good first step. Do this a little at a time. This prevents an association being made with the crate and your leaving him/her alone. **This also helps to prevent separation anxiety.** Your puppy should be able to be crated while you are home and active in the house. He/she does not need to be by your side all the time.

## Reminders

- An IWS has a heavy coat, it is very important to keep the crating area cool, especially the plastic vari-kennels. Cold water should always be available to puppies, especially during warm weather. Be mindful of where the sun falls in the room, so it does not directly shine on/in the crate.
- Do not be so quick to eliminate the crate from your pup's routine. Problems can occur if you stop using the crate, and he/she gets too much freedom too soon. Continuing to feed him/her in the crate, adding nice bedding to the crate when they are older, and feeding treats in the crate make it a positive place for your puppy to be.
- Resist the urge to let them out of their crate when they are vocal. Wait until a quiet moment and then let them out. The exception would be if they were fussing because they need to go to the bathroom. Be sure to make certain they have fully eliminated, have had a good romp and are ready for a nap before you put them in their crates.

## Accidents In The Crate

If your puppy messes in his crate while you are out, do not punish him upon your return. Simply wash out the crate using a pet odor neutralizer (such as Nature's Miracle). Do not use ammonia-based products, as the odor resembles urine and may draw your dog back to urinate in the same spot again.

### **Crating Duration Guidelines**

At bed time, keep the pup awake as much as possible before putting him to bed for the night. Take the pup outside to do its business, then put the pup in the crate and go to bed. In the beginning do not offer water immediately before putting your pup to bed for the evening. The pup should be fine for several hours. If the pup wakes up in the middle of the night, assume he needs to go to the bathroom. Carry the pup outside on a leash and tell them to "do their business". Go to the same spot they have been using and do not walk around at all, this is the spot where the pup needs to go. If you give them too much area they will want to explore and forget why they went outside. Once they go, praise them and return them to the crate. It is important to **NOT** make this a fun time because it will just encourage the pup to be vocal in the crate and be more of a challenge to crate during sleeping hours.

The general rule of thumb for the amount of time a pup can "hold their business" and stay in their crates is 1 hour more than their age in months (example: pup is 4 months old, he should be Ok for 5 hrs). The exception to this rule is in the evening. A puppy should be able to sleep through the night and hold their business until they wake up in the morning. Limiting water in the evening is advisable in the beginning.

### **The Crate As Punishment**

**NEVER** use the crate as a form of punishment or reprimand for your puppy or dog. This simply causes the dog to fear and resent the crate. If correctly introduced to his crate, your puppy should be happy to go into his crate at any time. You may however use the crate as a brief time-out for your puppy as a way of discouraging nipping or excessive rowdiness.