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CRATE TRAINING

Why crates make sense!

- + The canine species are den animals.
- + Dogs derive a feeling of security from being in their crates.
- + The crate's first use is as the dog's bed. It is also an excellent training tool.
- + An open bed gives a puppy too much freedom to find trouble.
- + A crate will protect both your possessions and your dog.

Introducing the crate

1. Line the crate with newspapers or a blanket.
2. Your pup's first experience with its crate should be pleasant.
3. Place the crate on the floor and allow the puppy to explore it.
4. Don't force the dog inside until he has sniffed every corner of the crate.
5. Prop the door open and place a few treats just inside the door.
6. As the dog develops more courage, toss the treats to the back of the crate so that the pup must go inside to get the treats.
7. When the pup is comfortable in the crate, close the door and leave it shut for a few minutes.
8. Let the dog out without ceremony.
9. Repeat the process several times, gradually extending the length of the closed door sessions.
10. The pup may complain at first, but do not reward the dog for whining by opening the crate door. Simply ignore the protests and they will soon stop.
11. If the pup is at all hesitant about entering the crate, do not force the pup through the door. Try feeding the pup in the crate for a day or two. We want this to be a safe haven for your pup, not a punishment!
12. When the puppy is comfortable in its crate, you're ready to take advantage of all its wonderful uses.

House Training with a Crate

Morning

At first peep, whine, or bark in the morning, open the crate door and immediately carry the smaller pup (attaching the leash as you go) or leash-lead the larger one, to the exact spot you want the dog to use. Just stand and let the pup wander about its leash. Make up a term that means "potty" to the dog. Some common ones are "potty", or "go pee." Once you've chosen a word or phrase, everyone in the family should use it consistently. As soon as the puppy goes, say "good

dog!" Continue to allow the puppy to explore in the same small area. If you find you are just staring at each other, move the leash back and forth to get the pup moving again. When the puppy has a bowel movement, give more praise--just an approving "good dog" not a standing ovation--and take the pup back inside. If the pup messes in the crate before waking you, don't scold. Set your alarm for 15 or 20 minutes earlier and be certain the pup relieves itself before going in to the crate at night. You may even try changing its feeding schedule and removing the water dish a little earlier. This may help the pup make it through the night. Your goal is prevention, not punishment. You want to set him or her up for success, not failure!

Then it is breakfast time for your new puppy. Place the dog's food dish and water bowl side by side in the crate. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for the dog to dine before removing the dish. Remove it when the time is up whether or not the pup has eaten all the food. Now take the pup back outside to that same spot. When the pup has eliminated, or, if after 5 or 10 minutes, he shows no sign of wanting to, play or go for a short walk then back to that spot again. It's extremely important to be right there to say "good dog" as the pup eliminates (at least for the first couple weeks). This is basic puppy training, however, and will last a lifetime! Now is a good time for some supervised freedom to explore the house, but only with supervision. In a working household this may be a weekend luxury.

Daytime

Be sure to monitor your pup's activities throughout the day. When the pup sniffs, walks in circles and appears anxious, it's your cue to head to the "spot" with the puppy. The success of house breaking depends on your quick response to the cue. If the puppy is successful again and again, he will soon begin to head for the spot when he feels the urge. If you can't constantly supervise the puppy, put it in the crate when you're busy. Just don't let it make a "mistake." If the puppy must be left alone, place the crate in a restricted area, such as a kitchen or bathroom with a baby gate across the door, and leave the crate door open. Put some safe toys in the crate and leave one patch of newspapers on the floor for an emergency. If you put newspapers all over the floor, the pup will decide where to go, which could be just about anywhere. By putting three or four thicknesses of newspaper in one spot, you have taken charge. Another good alternative is to have a friend or neighbor take the dog outside to his spot while you're at work. Then put the dog in the crate with a small treat and a couple of toys. Latch the door and take off (NO SPEECHES!). If you'll be gone more than two hours, confine the pup in a restricted area as described above. Older dogs can remain in their crates a little longer. When you return, immediately take the puppy out to the same spot.

Bedtime

A young pup's last meal should be no later than 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. followed by a drink of water. Then remove the water bowl. An hour or so before your bedtime, take the pup out for the last time. Put the crate in your bedroom before putting the dog to bed for the night. Then put the puppy into his crate with a toy and a small treat. Your mere presence will be comforting, so don't fall into the trap of talking to the pup as you're going to bed, or he will try to stay up to keep you company! If you go about your business, the pup will too. The important thing is that you'll be there to hear the very first sound that signals the first trip of the morning. When you put your pup in the crate and say good night, mean it. No going back to say good night later. No response to crying, whining, or barking, if you are certain the pup relieved himself before entering the crate.

Don't even punish the pup if it fusses. Your angry shout of "Quiet" is, to the pup, a response to his cries. The puppy reasons that any reply is better than none, so it will be encouraged to keep it up. Things will get better each night. A well-socialized puppy will very likely be sound asleep long before you turn out your light.

By adhering to a consistent schedule, you can house break your puppy in only a few days. But don't rush to brag yet! Monitor the pup's actions for several months. If the pup soils your house, be sure to clean the area immediately with a commercial odor-eliminator or a solution of vinegar and water. If a pup is allowed to "urine mark" places in the house, he will return again and again to mark that spot. Do not punish the dog for house soiling-- unless you catch the pup in the act!

Other Uses for the Crate:

Car Travel

The crate physically protects the dog in the car. It restrains the dog in case of an accident. In case of a serious accident, the crated dog will not be thrown into the window or out the window. The dog cannot escape from the car to become lost or even killed. The crate enables anyone coming to your rescue to remove the dog quickly from the scene. This alone could save time needed to assist other. Two hundred thousand dogs are killed each year from falling, jumping or being thrown from cars and pickup trucks.

Traveling Bed

If you travel with your dog, his crate is invaluable. When you take a crate along, the dog identifies with the security of this little piece of home. You can prevent nights of lost sleep if you take a crate with you to the hotel, the campsite or your friend's home. A dog that whines, destroys property or soils the facility is not likely to receive invitations to return. You will be a welcome guest if your dog displays good manners. If air travel is in your plans, the crate will be the vessel that carries your dog to your destination. If your dog is already crate-trained, the trip will be less stressful. A calm dog will not need tranquilizers to travel in a crate.

In-Home Confinement

There are times that the dog is just in the way, or some friends are just not suited to enjoying the dog's company. Older people and children often are better guests when your dog is out of the way. The dog won't mind spending some time in his special place. Crate training plays a major role in preventing separation anxiety. The stress of being abandoned can cause a dog to chew through doors, walls and carpets when left alone. A correctly crate-trained dog seldom experiences the panic of being left alone.

For the injured dog, or the dog that is recovering from surgery, the crate will help the healing process. When your veterinarian advises you to keep the dog quiet and still, the crate provides a way to comply with the instructions.

Once you've discovered all the fine uses for a dog's crate, and after you see how much the dog likes his crate, you will develop an even longer list of uses for it!