

## *Crate Training & House Training for Puppies*

House training is teaching your puppy not to eliminate in the house. When puppies are less than 16 weeks of age, they are still “open” to the type of surface on which they will eliminate. It is very important that during this period we teach them on what surface they are allowed to eliminate (ie grass) and on what surfaces they are not (ie carpet.) We do this by praising the puppy for eliminating on the grass and preventing him from eliminating in the house.

- Every time your puppy eliminates on an unacceptable surface unnoticed, the risk is greater that he will continue to use that surface. Therefore any time your puppy is in the house and not in his crate, you must be watching him to make sure that he is not eliminating.
- If the puppy does eliminate in the house- just clean up the mess, do not scold him. It was your mistake and not his.
- As soon as your puppy eliminates on the grass praise him with your happiest voice or a small treat. If there is a certain part of the yard you wish for him to use, take him to that spot every day.
- Resist the urge to just put your puppy outside and assume he will eliminate. Use every time he goes outside as an opportunity to reinforce that grass is the appropriate place to eliminate.
- Never take your puppy for a walk until after he eliminates. This will prevent him from waiting as long as he can to eliminate so that he can go for a walk.

Crate training is intended to provide a comfortable bed, den, or play area for your puppy, while restricting access to areas where he might housesoil, hurt himself, or damage your house. Crate training should be considered akin to placing a young child in a playpen or crib for playtime or sleeping. If you don't provide a safe confinement area at times that you cannot supervise, your puppy will wander the home unsupervised and will likely engage in destructive chewing, eliminate in undesirable locations, and get into potentially dangerous situations. Each time he is allowed to do these things it reinforces the behavior and it may become a habit. For this reason, crate training is an extremely valuable tool for house training.

The location and techniques used for crate training should be designed to keep the experience positive. For example, your puppy should be encouraged to sleep, nap, or play with his chew toys in his crate. On the other hand, if he is confined at a time when he is in need of play, attention, or elimination, then escape attempts and anxiety are to be expected. If your puppy's attempts at escape are ever successful, then future, more ambitious attempts to escape are likely to occur. Therefore, training should be begun gradually and only when you are at home to monitor and a secure, inescapable crate should be utilized.

### Benefits of a crate trained dog

1. Security – a specific area that serves as a den or resting area for your dog
2. Safety- from electric cords, ingesting foreign objects or toxic substances
3. Prevents damage (chewing, elimination, etc.)
4. Aids in the training of proper chewing and elimination by preventing failure and encouraging success
5. Traveling: accustoms your dog to confinement for traveling and boarding
6. Improved relationship with your puppy: fewer problems and therefore less discipline and less frustration/anxiety for you



## Beginning crate training

- Introduce your puppy to the crate as early as possible. No puppy is ever too young to be crate trained. Young puppies may not be physically able to hold their eliminations for more than a couple of hours so they must be taken outside very frequently.
- Place the crate in an area of the house where the family spends time. Dogs are social creatures and the crate should be placed in an area where the puppy feels he is still part of the family.
- Always feed your puppy in his crate. This allows him to associate one of his favorite things with being in his crate.
- Leave the door of the crate open and any time your puppy chooses to enter the crate on his own, praise him with your voice, treats, or toys. You may bait the crate with some treats to encourage him to enter on his own.
- The first confinement session should be after a period of play, exercise, and elimination (i.e., when the puppy is ready to take a nap). Place the puppy in its crate with a toy and a treat and close the door. Alternatively, if the puppy lies down to take a nap, move the puppy to the crate for the duration of the nap.
- Leave the room but remain close enough to hear the puppy. Some degree of distress vocalization is to be expected the first few times the puppy is separated from its family members. Never reward him by letting him out when he cries or whines. Ignore him until the crying stops. Release the puppy when he wakes or if you need to awaken him for feeding, play, or elimination (e.g., prior to your departure).
- If crying does not subside on its own, a mild interruption may be useful. Any interruption that causes fear or anxiety must be avoided. The interruption should not scare the puppy, merely cause him to pause for a second to listen. During the interruption, you should remain out of sight, so that the puppy does not learn to associate the interruption with your presence. A sharp noise, such as that provided by a shaker containing a few coins may be used.
- Prior to bedtime, the puppy should be exercised and allowed to relieve himself. The more he plays during the day, the more he is likely to see his crate as a welcome rest!
- The crate may be repositioned at bedtime to an area of the house where you will not be awakened if he cries. Eventually once your puppy is comfortable with his crate and does not cry in it unless he needs to relieve himself, you may leave the crate in the daytime location.
- Until the puppy is approximately 14 weeks, he will probably not be able to hold his eliminations all night. To speed training and prevent a mess in the morning, it is advisable to set an alarm in the middle of the night to take him outside for an opportunity to relieve himself.
- When taking the puppy outside in the middle of the night, there should be no play. Once he relieves himself, praise him generously and take him directly back to his crate.
- Never leave your puppy in his crate for longer than he can control his eliminations or he will be forced to eliminate in the crate.
- Until a puppy has been housetrained (no accidents for at least two consecutive months) and no longer destroys household objects in your absence, it should not be allowed out of its confinement area except under direct supervision. Usually this does not occur until around 1 year of age.