



THE DOGGY DIGEST

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Crate Training...Cruel or Beneficial?

Crate training is an important component of puppyhood. This is a temporary part of the process, and can usually begin being phased out when your dog is about one and a half years old. If done properly, crating your puppy can be the best thing you ever teach him. In this article, we will explore why crate training is not cruel, but actually beneficial and necessary.

So, why crate train your puppy? Crating your puppy during the first six to eight months of his life will establish good habits. While your puppy is being potty trained and house trained, the crate can be a great management tool. Your puppy cannot soil the living room carpet or decide the antique kitchen table will make a fine chew toy while he is safely confined in his crate. He also cannot accidentally ingest something harmful while you are at work.

Crating your puppy is safer than leaving him to his devices in the backyard. He can be just as destructive and bored outside as he is inside. Adequate exercise is important to a successful crate training program and will help your puppy be calmer when he has to be confined. Having a dog who loves his crate can also make traveling a lot easier.

Preparing The Crate: If your puppy is being potty trained, the crate should only be big enough for him to stand without crouching, turn around easily, and lie down with room to stretch. If the crate is too big, he may decide that one side of the crate is for elimination, and the other side is for sleeping. Once he is potty trained, you can get a bigger crate.

Introduction And Training Process: Begin by placing treats or dog food kibble in and around the crate. Let your puppy watch you do this. Praise him and give him a lot of love for going into the crate for the treats. If your puppy is more toy motivated, you can do this with his favorite toys as well.

Next, when your puppy isn't looking, place a few high-value food items in the front and back of the crate. If your puppy doesn't discover them himself, invite him over to investigate by using your cue phrase. This may be anything from "Kennel-up", "Crate", or "Go In". Whatever you choose, it should be consistent with all of the family members. The cue word should be accompanied by a pointing gesture into the crate. This should be done 15-20 times a day.

Feed your puppy in his crate. Place his food dish in the back of the crate; and if he's hesitant to go to the back, bring the bowl closer to the front. Begin closing the door to the crate as he eats, as well as during the crate game that you play with him. Continue doing this until your puppy can eat his full meal and stay in there for about ten minutes without whining.

The crate should never be a form of punishment. If you find yourself frustrated with your puppy, neutrally ask him to "go in"-as you have already taught him- give him a treat, and walk away to regain your composure.

Getting Your Puppy Used To Being Alone: It is important at the beginning for your puppy not to associate the crate with loneliness or isolation. Try to accomplish the following before you leave your puppy alone for the first time: Increase time in the crate by randomly calling your puppy over and asking him to go into the crate with your cue word and hand signal. Show him the treat you have in your hand. When he goes in, close the door and sit in front of the crate for five minutes, then get up and leave the room. After another five minutes, come back and sit in front of the crate again for a few minutes. After letting your puppy out, be enthusiastic, and perhaps offer another treat. Reward him with a short walk, a game of fetch, or tug-of-war. Repeat this step until he can stay for thirty minutes to an hour.

Once your puppy is comfortable with being in his crate for 30 to 60 minutes, you can begin leaving the house for short durations of two to four hours. The process of teaching your puppy to be alone can take days or weeks.

When you let your puppy out of his crate, stay calm, and resist the urge to greet him with a high-pitched voice and excitement. Immediately walk him outside to eliminate and then praise him with as much enthusiasm as you can muster. This helps teach your puppy to remain calm when you come home and encourages him in eliminating outside. Remember to take it slow and be patient.

Stay consistent, and until next time, keep it pawisitive!