



## CRATE TRAINING

Any wild canine will secure a small snugly fitted space to call its own. This space represents security to the dog. In its den it cannot be attacked or bothered, so it is able to relax fully. This instinctive desire for a secure den is the basis for the psychology behind using a crate as a training aid. Once the pet owner has overcome his own prejudice against 'caging' a pet and accepts the sound reasoning behind crate training, she and her dog can begin to enjoy the benefits of the marvelous crate.

To accustom your dog to its new crate, prop open the door and allow the dog to explore the confines of the crate. Placing food or a favorite toy inside will encourage it to step in. When the dog is comfortable, close the door and keep it confined for five or ten minutes. When you let the dog out, do so unceremoniously. Releasing the dog should not be a big deal.

Each time you put your dog in the crate, increase the time she is confined. Eventually the dog can be confined for up to four hours at a time. If the crate also serves as the dog's bed, it can be left crated throughout the night. Don't overuse the crate, though. Both you and your dog should think of it as a safe haven, not a prison.

Use the soothing effect of the crate to convey to your dog that it is bedtime. Many dogs will learn to go directly to their crates when they are ready to call it a day. Often the use of a crate will convince a restless dog to stop howling at the moon or barking at every little sound, allowing its owners to sleep through the night without disturbance.

Many dogs receive their meals in their crates. Finicky eaters are made to concentrate on the food being offered, and as a result, overcome their eating problems. For the owners of more than one dog, the crate serves as a way to regulate the food intake of each dog. If dogs in the same household have different diets, crate feeding is almost essential. It can also make mealtimes less stressful if you have a dominant dog that tries to keep the others away from the food bowls.

Housebreaking is made easier when the wise owner relies on the help of the crate. Until the dog is dependably housetrained, it should not be given the opportunity to make a mistake. A healthy dog will not soil its den—the place where it sleeps. If the crate is the right size for your dog—allowing just enough room to stand up and turn around, it will not soil its crate. If you purchase a crate for a puppy based on the size of a mature dog, you may need to block off one end to prevent it being used for elimination.

Any time you cannot keep close watch on the puppy, kindly place it in its crate. When the dog eliminates at the proper time, reward it. With assistance of a crate, housetraining can be almost painless for you and your puppy.

The crate is also a safety seat for a travelling dog. You may know that shipping a dog requires a crate, but do you realize that a crate in your car serves as a seatbelt to protect your dog in an accident? A dog thrown out of a car or through a windshield has little chance of surviving. In the event you or your passenger need medical care after an accident, a crate will prevent the dog from 'guarding' you from the paramedics.

If you need to ship your dog by air, the task will be made easier if the dog is already used to its crate. A crate trained dog is relaxed and less likely to need sedation for traveling. Avoiding sedatives removes one of the major risks of air travel for dogs, and your dog will be alert and happy when it arrives.

When you travel and have to leave your dog behind, the caretaker will have a much easier time caring for a crate-trained dog, and she will appreciate being able to confine the dog for rest periods. Your dog will also enjoy being able to take its crate (and a little bit of home) with it if it must spend the night in an unfamiliar place.

No untrained dog should be given the run of the house while the owner is away. This not only creates risk from the standpoint of your belongings, but also for the safety of the dog. An untrained dog could chew through an electrical cord, get trapped under a piece of furniture it has upset, or be poisoned and choked by a piece of trash. Use a crate to protect the untrained dog from itself. Of course, this means you will have to limit your time away from home. A puppy must be taken out at regular intervals to exercise and relieve itself.

If your dog becomes ill or needs surgery, confinement in a crate will assure it the extra rest it needs during the recovery period. The wonderful crate serves as a hospital bed too.

In dozens of different ways, the addition of a crate means better care for your dog. It reinforces consistency in training. It helps the dog feel more secure. It makes having strangers in the house less hectic. It makes travel safer and more comfortable. It makes bringing up a puppy much easier. Once you have experienced the benefits of crate training your dog, you will question how you ever lived without that marvelous crate.