



SAN TAN CANINE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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CRATE TRAINING

WHAT IS A DOG CRATE?

A dog crate is a cage made of wire or molded plastic. Its purpose is to provide confinement for reasons of security, safety, housebreaking, protection of household goods, travel or illness. You may think that putting your pet in a crate is mean or inhumane and might cause your pet to resent you or to be psychologically damaged. However, dogs view the world differently than people. As your dog sees it, the crate is a room of his very own - a "security blanket". The crate helps to satisfy the "den instinct" inherited from his den-dwelling ancestors and relatives. Your pet will feel secure, not frustrated once accustomed to his crate. Your pet wants to please you and you want to enjoy him. The crate can help you achieve a better relationship with your pet by preventing unwanted behavior when you aren't available to supervise him.

THE ADVANTAGES OF USING A CRATE

- You can enjoy peace of mind when leaving your dog alone, knowing that nothing can be soiled or destroyed and that he is comfortable, safe, and not developing bad habits.
- You can housebreak your pet more quickly by using the close confinement to motivate your pet to wait until taken outside, since canines naturally avoid soiling their den.
- You can travel with your pet without risk of the dog getting loose and becoming lost or interfering with safe driving.
- Your dog can enjoy the security and privacy of a den of his own to which he can retreat when tired or stressed.
- Your dog can avoid much of the fear and confusion caused by your reaction to problem behavior.
- Since he can more easily adapt to staying in unfamiliar places as long as he has his familiar "security blanket" along, your pet can be included in family outings, instead of being left behind alone.

WHERE SHOULD I PUT IT?

Dogs are social animals. Place the crate in an area where the family spends a lot of time – kitchen, family room, etc. The top of the crate can serve as extra shelf or table space. At night, move your puppy's crate into your bedroom so you can hear him if he needs to go out.

CRATING A PUPPY

A young puppy should have no problem accepting the crate as his place. Crying at first is caused, not by the crate, but by adjusting to an unfamiliar household. Do not reward barking or whining with attention! If you are sure he doesn't need to eliminate, ignore him until he is quiet, then praise him or take him out of the crate. Do not leave meals in the crate or feed your puppy immediately prior to confining him. Most puppies will spill water left in the crate. Do leave a safe chew toy in the crate for your pet. Close your pet in the crate whenever he must be left alone or can't be closely supervised by a responsible person.

Never crate your pet longer than you know he can wait to eliminate, and definitely less than 4 hour intervals during the day. If you occasionally must be gone longer than this, place the crate with the door open in an enclosed area such as a bathroom or laundry room. Place newspapers on the floor of the room to facilitate clean-up. Your puppy should soon stop eliminating overnight and then may be crated in his regular place.

CRATE TRAINING DOGS OVER 6 MONTHS OLD

Often problem behaviors in this age group result from the pet feeling insecure when left alone. A crate can actually help alleviate this anxiety, but it must be introduced gradually and in a positive manner. The dog's first association with the crate should be pleasant.

First secure the door open so that it can't suddenly shut and frighten the dog. Encourage your pet to enter voluntarily by tossing a treat into the far end, praising him enthusiastically once he enters, then letting him come right back out. Once he enters the crate confidently, coax him to lie down and relax, using food, if necessary. Shut the door briefly, while you sit beside the crate or when there are people in the room. Again, don't reward barking or whining, with attention.

When you feel your dog will remain quietly in the crate, leave him alone for 15 - 30 minutes. If all goes well, you can leave him for longer intervals. Eventually, you may no longer need to shut him in the crate, but he will probably appreciate still having access to his special place.

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