

A Pet Owners Guide To The Dog Crate

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Far too many potentially good pets are misunderstood, unfairly punished, isolated, abused or simply “gotten rid of” by otherwise kind and well-meaning owners who are unable to prevent, control or live with the common problem behavior of puppies and young adult dogs. The correct use of a dog crate could give many of these innocent animals the chance they need and deserve to spend to spend their lives as the appreciated pet of a satisfied owner.

WHAT IS A DOG CRATE?

A dog crate is a rectangular enclosure with a top and a door made in a variety of sizes proportioned to fit any type of dog. Constructed of wire, wood, metal or molded confinement for reasons of security, safety, housebreaking, protection of household goods, travel, illness or general control. The dog crate has long been accepted, trusted and taken for granted by dog show exhibitors, obedience and field trail competitors, trainers, breeders, groomers, veterinarians and anyone else who handles dogs regularly. Individual pet owners, however, usually reject the idea of using a crate because they consider such enforced close confinement unfair and even harmful to the dog.

CRUELTY OR KINDNESS?

As the pet owner sees it: “Its like a jail – it’s cruel – I would never put my dog in cage like that !” If this is your first reaction to using a dog crate, you are a very typical pet owner. As a reasoning human being you really value your freedom and since you consider your pet as an extension of the human family, it is only natural that closing him in a crate would be mean and inhumane; would probably cause him to resent and even hate you and might well result in psychological damage.

BUT YOU ARE NOT A DOG!

As a dog sees it: “I love having a room/house of my very own, it’s my private special place, my security blanket and the closed door doesn’t bother me” If your dog could talk this is how he might well express his reaction to using a crate! He would tell you that the crate helps you to satisfy the “DEN INSTINCT” inherited from his den-dwelling ancestors and relatives and that he is not afraid or frustrated when closed. He would further admit that he is actually much happier and more secure having his life controlled and constructed by human beings and would far rather be prevented from causing trouble than be punished for it later. So to you it may be a cage but to him it is a home.

USE BUT DON’T ABUSE

The use of a dog crate is not recommended for a dog which must be frequently or regularly left alone for extended periods of time, such as all or much of the day while the owner is away at work, school etc. If it is attempted the dog must be exercised before and

after crating, given lots of personal private attention and be allowed complete freedom at night (including sleeping near his owner.) His crate must be large enough to permit him comfortably to stretch out fully on his side and to feel that he has freedom to movement; it must also be equipped with a clip-on dish for water.

DOES THE CRATE ALWAYS WORK?

Unfortunately, no. Although, most pet owners can indeed use a crate successfully, there are always those animals, which simply will not tolerate this form of confinement. This reaction is not clearly as common with the young puppy, as with an adult dog, especially an “adoptee” of unknown background a dog, which may somehow have suffered a traumatic frightening experience while created or an un-adaptable “senior citizen” Some pure breeds also seem to have a special aversion to crates. In some cases a dog will use a crate readily as long as the door remains open, but will object violently the moment it is closed and/or he is left alone. It should be stressed here, however, that these reactions definitely represent the exception rather than the rule and that most average pet dogs can successfully train to use a crate.

If despite every effort at positive conditioning (leaving door open for several days while feeding from inside and fetching toys thrown into crate) your dog is obviously frantic or totally miserable when confined to a crate, salivates profusely, blood lies himself or urinates/defecates, forcing him to use one is indeed inhumane and can result in real physical injury should he attempt to chew his way out.

Even though a crate does not always work it is always worth a try, because when it does prevent or solve a problem behavior it is truly the “best friend” you and your dog could ever have.