The Importance of Crate Training

A crate has many different uses in a dog's life: for many dogs it is a lifelong place of security and comfort. Teaching your dog to use his crate is beneficial to both of you. Crates can be used for travel, for respite from party guests or small children, and for emergency evacuations.

Teaching a puppy to sleep in its crate can be difficult at first. Puppies go from a pile of siblings and a mom to being by themselves, often overnight. Your puppy's night time crate should be near someone who can quietly, verbally, provide comfort, if needed, and also be ready for night time potty breaks until the puppy is old enough to sleep through the night. The puppy should take his daytime naps in his crate so he gets more accustomed to sleeping there. Many puppies learn that their crate is a safe respite and begin to go in on their own to rest.

Teaching your foster or adult dog to crate can be more of a challenge. Dogs who have **not** been crated in the past are often not comfortable with the confinement, especially if coming right out of a shelter or kennel environment. However, training an adult dog to use a crate may save your house and/or yard from destruction or potty accidents. With adult dogs I use treats to have them go into the crate and then I close the door. I do this during a time when I am in the room where the crate is so I can assure them that they have not been abandoned. Reward quiet and calmness in the crate. I usually give them something indestructible like a stuffed Kong or chew toy of some sort. You can also feed your dog in his crate. I will use the crate at various times during the day when either one of us needs a break. At night time the dog is close enough to hear me if he needs reassurance.

It is said that the crate should not be used for punishment. However, I find using a crate for a "time out" to be very successful. I believe the dog understands that being away from his family is the bigger punishment than being in his crate, especially if the crate is used routinely.

Crate training my dogs has allowed me to take multiple dogs to visit family, on vacations, and to training classes (many agility classes ask you to crate your dog while other dogs work). Crates in my car make it safe for everyone while driving. During the pandemic, while I was home 24 hours a day for 12 weeks my adult dogs were following every move I made. I instituted "Nap time" for them every afternoon and all three of them snored through it; without crates they never would have rested.

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