

HAPPINESS IS A DOG CRATE

TO CRATE OR NOT TO CRATE?

Many people have the wrong impression about crate training. Unknowing friends have called it cruel or unfair to crate-train a puppy. Nothing could be further from the truth. Here's why:

Most puppies were raised in a small pen or whelping box. Remember, dogs in the wild such as wolves and coyotes raise their pups in dens. It may look like a 'cage' to you, but it's very soon 'home' to your dog. For him, it's a 'den' of his very own, a private, special place—a 'security blanket.' He is not afraid or frustrated when closed in; rather, he prefers having his structured and controlled.

Most puppies are instinctively clean and will not soil their beds. When your puppy can not be with you, his crate gives him a safe place to stay until you can get him outdoors to eliminate in the appropriate area. You can housebreak your dog more quickly by using the close confinement to encourage control, establish a regular routine for outdoor elimination and to prevent 'accidents' overnight or when left alone. You can keep him from underfoot if there are workmen in the house or if he's just too excitable at times. You can travel with him safely in his portable 'house.'



A young puppy (6-8 weeks) should have no problem accepting a crate as his 'own place.' Any complaining he might do at first is caused not by the crate, but by his learning to accept the controls of his unfamiliar new environment. His crate must be large enough to permit him to comfortably stretch out on his side and have freedom of movement. He should be able to lie down and sit up without hitting his head. The crate must also have a clip-on dish for water. Place the crate in people areas, such as the family room. Do not keep crate away from drafts and direct heat sources. Crate or no crate, any dog denied the human companionship it needs and craves is going to be a lonely pet—and may still find ways to express anxiety, depression, and general stress.

Establish a crate routine immediately, closing the puppy in at regular one to two hour intervals during the day (his own chosen nap times will guide you). Give him a chew toy for distraction and be sure to remove collar and tags which might become caught in an opening. One point to remember is never to put your pup in the crate as punishment. Make it normal activity, with no negative overtones. The crate may be used for five or six months, or until the dog is well past the teething phase. Then start leaving the crate open when dog is briefly left alone. If all goes well, remove the crate and leave the bedding in the same spot. Should any problem behavior occur, such as breaking house training, go back to the crate routine.