

ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

Crate Training Your Puppy

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Adding a puppy to the household can be a wonderful experience, but the relationship can sour before it even begins if the puppy ruins carpets and chews furniture. There is a training tool that will enable you to train your new puppy and avoid disaster – the crate. Dog crates were originally designed for use by airlines to transport animals. Dog crates now have many practical uses.

A crate can provide a solution to most house training problems. Crate training employs a pup's natural instinct not to soil his den. By utilizing that instinct, you can teach the puppy to hold his bladder or bowels instead of relieving himself immediately.

Occasionally a dog must be protected from his environment, and vice-versa. A crate can prevent the destruction of your house. Since you won't continually come home to a damaged house, your pup can be greeted with a smile instead of a scolding.

Your dog is much safer riding in a crate in your vehicle than traveling loose. Sudden stops and accidents pose great dangers to dogs. A crated dog will be much more likely to survive an accident, like a person in a seatbelt. Usually there is no need for sedatives; the crate-trained dog travels in the comfort of his "home away from home".

Introduce the crate by first leaving the door propped open and tossing a toy or treat inside. Allow the pup to come and go as he wishes. After a day of this, start to feed the pup in the crate, but again, leave the door open. After a few meals, feed him inside but shut the door. Open it as soon as the pup has finished eating. At this point, never let the pup out of the crate if he is crying, scratching at the door or fighting the crate. Don't teach the puppy that you will let him out if he raises a fuss!

Start crating the puppy at night. Set the crate right next to your bed so that you can reach it without getting up. This allows the pup to hear you and smell you all night long – a wonderful time for bonding without any effort on your part. Plan on getting up at least once during the night to let your pup outside to relieve himself.

If you crate the pup during the day, never leave him in it for more than 4 hours at a time. If you work full time and cannot get home, hire a neighbor – perhaps a teenager or a senior citizen – to let your puppy out.

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Make the crate the puppy's own special place where he can hide toys or retreat when tired. Many adult dogs that were crate-trained as puppies continue to use the crate as a place of refuge.

The crate should be large enough for the puppy to stand up and turn around, but should not be too roomy. If you have a large-breed puppy you should purchase a crate that will fit your dog when he becomes an adult. To help with house training, make it smaller by putting up a cardboard barrier until he gets bigger. If the crate is too big, he will just go off in a corner to potty instead of holding it.

If you find that you cannot let your puppy out often enough to prevent him from soiling in the crate, then it is best to make a "play pen", or a larger crate where he can have a papered area to potty. Slowly decrease the size of the papered area. Take some of the soiled paper outside to encourage him to use that area when you are home. Although it may take longer to house break him, that is better than allowing him to potty on himself or have to lay in it all day.

If you have questions call us at the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643. 🐾