

**Your puppy's crate is probably one of the most important purchases you can make. It is his home inside your home.**

**A CRATE HAS MANY BENEFITS**

- ▶ It provides a den and a safe haven for your puppy
- ▶ It helps you to create a routine
- ▶ It aids in curbing destructive behaviour
- ▶ It is excellent for toilet training puppies
- ▶ It trains puppies to hold their bladders
- ▶ It can be used for travel

**DEN HEAVEN**

In the wild, dogs live in dens. These act as a safe and warm haven that keeps them dry and away from danger. There is a great sense of wellbeing, security and primal familiarity in a puppy's den. It is also a place where the mothers teach their young to toilet outside; dogs naturally want to keep their dens clean and dry. So with all these natural instincts wrapped up in this den-like environment, crate training can be relatively smooth.

**CHOOSING THE RIGHT CRATE**

There are many types of crates available and before making your purchase decide what is going to be best for you and your puppy's needs.

**Size**

- ▶ A puppy or adult dog should be able to comfortably stand up, lie down, stretch and turn around inside his crate
- ▶ Don't buy a crate that is far too big for your puppy unless it has an area that can be sectioned off to make it smaller. A very large crate defeats the purpose of creating a den
- ▶ If your crate is too large your puppy will toilet in an area within the crate itself
- ▶ You may need a crate for your puppy now and another when your puppy becomes an adult

**TYPES**

**Wire collapsible crates:**

These are easy to erect and collapse which makes it a breeze for travel and storage. Dividers can be added – which means that you can section off an area when your puppy is very small and increase the area as your puppy grows.

A crate cover is also an optional extra; it can be placed over the crate and creates a den like area that allows your puppy to feel very secure. Wire crates also have an easily removal base for cleaning.

**Plastic hard shell crates:**

These are normally lighter and should be used for trips to the vet and can sometimes be used for air travel (always check with the airline first). Smaller versions of these normally have a handle for easy transportation.

**Soft crates:**

These are really designed for transportation for busy pet parents on the move. They are not, however, airline approved and we don't recommend them for puppies or heavy chewers.

**GETTING YOUR PUPPY TO USE THE CRATE**

Getting your puppy to use his crate is a gradual process. Set the crate up so that it is cosy and inviting. Place a crate mat on the base of the crate and have a bedding area inside with a soft bed. Leave the crate door wide open and tempt your puppy into the crate using a treat. Place the treat in the back of the crate so that he has to go completely inside to retrieve it. Just use a piece of your dog's kibble or his favourite toy for this. When your puppy first ventures into his crate stay close to him and reassure him that all is well. Gradually close the door and once he is comfortable, stay with him and reassure him at this point. Keep the "closed door" periods short at this stage. When you are happy that all is well with your puppy in his crate with the door closed, remove yourself; initially for short periods and gradually increase these in duration.

**Make sure that his crate is always a refuge; never use this as a punishment area.**

**SAFETY**

- ▶ Remove your puppy's collar and lead before crating
- ▶ Don't leave him alone for long periods initially
- ▶ Don't leave your puppy with a toy or treat that may be dangerous if left unsupervised
- ▶ Don't force your puppy to use the crate unless he is completely comfortable

**TOILETING**

Puppies and dogs need to relieve themselves at regular intervals and after these activities:

- ▶ Resting
- ▶ Playing
- ▶ Training
- ▶ Feeding

Create a routine and take your puppy to his designated toilet area after these events or when you notice that he is displaying pre-toileting behaviour such as:

- ▶ Sniffing the ground
- ▶ Whining
- ▶ Circling
- ▶ Becoming restless

**TOILETING TIPS**

- ▶ Use a command such as "be quick" or "hurry up".
- ▶ Praise with a treat and/or a high pitched voice.
- ▶ Get your whole family involved in this routine and command cue.
- ▶ When your puppy is very young he will need to be toileted through the night about every four hours.
- ▶ Your puppy's bladder control should be well on the way to having complete control by the time he is four to five months of age.
- ▶ Crates are excellent tools for teaching your puppy to "hold on" and training his bladder for adulthood.
- ▶ It is possible to use the same technique to train an adult dog to use a crate. As with puppies this requires patience and praise but it is worth it!
- ▶ The time and effort put into the crating process will be beneficial for your puppy and your family for years to come.

