

CRATING

The dog crate has long been accepted, trusted, and taken for granted by dog show exhibitors, obedience and field trial competitors, trainers, breeders, groomers, veterinarians, and anyone else who handles dogs regularly. Individual pet owners, however, often view a crate as somehow unfair to a dog. They see the crate as a jail, a tool to unfairly restrict the dog's freedom. Truly, it is more like a playpen – it can watch your pup when you can't.

Advantages of using a crate:

It can make housebreaking much easier by using short-term close confinement to encourage control, establish a regular routine for outdoor elimination and avoid a situation where the puppy slips out of sight for a moment and has an accident.

It prevents the dog from getting into dangerous or poisonous items or damaging your house when you are gone or unable to watch the dog.

It can be used while traveling with the dog. The driver will not be dangerously distracted, the dog will be less likely to be seriously injured in an accident, and the dog won't be able to dash out of the car and be injured or lost. The dog will adapt to new surroundings more easily if he has his own "den" along. The dog will be happy to be included in family trips instead of being kenneled or left behind.

The dog can retreat to the crate for a nap or to get away from household confusion (especially children). While a dog should be taught to allow you to reach into the crate, children should be taught that it is the dog's special room, and he should be left strictly alone if he is in there.

The dog can be spared being relegated to the basement, garage, or backyard to prevent problem behaviors. Dogs are very social animals, and don't do well without plenty of daily human contact.

The crate should be long enough to allow the adult dog to stretch out fully on his side and stand up without hitting his head. It should be slightly longer than the dog is from the tip of the nose to the base of the tail. Use clip-on bowls for food and water to prevent spillage. When the dog is a puppy, you can make the crate proportionately smaller with a piece of plywood or masonite. One of the most convenient crates is the folding wire type, which are highly portable and allow for good ventilation and visibility for the dog. Plastic airline-type crates work well also, and can be used for shipping dogs on planes. Crates can be obtained at pet stores or through mail-order catalogues.

It is best to place the crate in a "people" area of the house. Dogs are very social, and generally do better if they feel like they are a part of the action. Accustom the dog to the crate gradually by feeding him there, and putting some of his favorite toys inside. Don't close the door until he goes in willingly on his own. Start with brief periods of

confinement and work up to hours. Dogs that resist staying in the crate should not be forced to remain inside.