

MONTGOMERY COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

PET BEHAVIOR AND TRAINING SERVICES, INC.

CRATE TRAINING

Written by Pet Behavior and Training Services, Inc. for use by the Montgomery County Animal Shelter

A HOME WITHIN A HOME – the denning instinct

In the wild, puppies are born in a small area known as a den. Even adult dogs try to find a protected area to sleep in. This instinct is handed down to our family dogs. Ever notice how dogs like to get under a bed, end table or other small enclosed area. A crate can provide your dog with his own den. It gives him a place to call his own, and a valuable way to control house soiling and destructive chewing in your absence or whenever you can't supervise.

Later, when the dog can be trusted alone in the house while you are sleeping or gone, you will find other uses for the crate. Many dogs prefer to ride in a crate in a car. When visiting relatives, the family dog that can be crated is often more welcome than one that must have total run of the house privileges. Many dogs continue to use their crates (with the door open) whenever they want to "get away from it all" and just relax.

WARNING You may want to take the precaution of removing the dog's collar when it is in the crate to prevent it from becoming caught.

HOW TO ACCUSTOM YOUR DOG TO A CRATE

- As with all training, it is important to make your dog's experience with the crate a pleasant one. It should be his "safe" place. **Never use the crate as punishment.**
- To introduce the crate, toss some wonderful tidbits of food right inside and encourage him to go after them. Practice this many times. Say "crate up" or "bed". When he is comfortable going in and out, try closing the door for a few seconds. Offer him a treat through the crate door. Open the door and allow him to come out. Practice this over and over using treats and lots of upbeat praise.
- Gradually increase the amount of time he spends in his crate, while you are busy in the same room. Give him a special chew toy (a Kong or sterilized bone with a bit of

cheese or peanut butter stuffed in it). This should keep him happy in the crate. Practice this many times. Start with one or two minutes, work up to 20 minutes.

- Now you are ready to crate him with his special toy and leave the room. Return after a few minutes, open the door. Gradually build up the time he will stay in the crate while you work around the house. Sometimes you will be in his sight and sometimes out of his sight.
- When he is relaxed in the crate while you are working around the house, you can try leaving the house. Return after a minute or two. Say “I’m back” and let him out. Gradually build up the time he will stay in the crate while you are gone.

LOCATION

- Do not isolate your dog by putting his home away from yours. For the dog that likes to be in the middle of things, place his crate in the corner of the family room or kitchen. For the dog that has trouble relaxing in the midst of commotion, try your bedroom.

While this sounds like a lot of training, it usually only takes a few days to a week or two to complete.

If you need further information or help with training, you may call us for an appointment at 937-293-5686. If you live outside the area, ask your veterinarian for referrals to a pet behavior specialist.

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A non-profit organization specializing in the behavior of pets

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