



## **Cochrane & Area HUMANE SOCIETY**

*Pets Deserve Loving Homes ~ Loving Homes Deserve Pets*

### **Crate Training**

*Having a dog accustomed to a crate can be helpful in many situations. It is one of the most effective management and prevention tools. Below are some reasons to crate train a dog:*

- **House Training:** Provides a close confinement that inhibits the dog from urinating or defecating. If the dog has accidents in the crate, remove any bedding. Ensure the crate is only big enough for the dog to stand, lie and turn around in.
- **Prevents Destructive Chewing:** The dog is not given the opportunity to do this out of sight of the owner. You can give the dog appropriate chew toys in the crate.
- **Settling:** Through proper training, it teaches the dog to lie and settle when alone.
- **Prepare for Travel:** Accustoms dog to close confinement. Prevents added stress when traveling or situations where kenneling is required.
- **Safety:** The dog will not be able to gain access to items that could be harmful or fatal.

*You can create trauma for the dog if you do not introduce the crate properly. The steps to accustom your dog to the crate are:*

1. Put the crate in a high traffic area and keep the door open (may even remove it to start).
2. Occasionally toss treats into the back of the crate for your dog to find on his own.
3. Feed your dog's meal inside the crate.
4. Tie a high value toy to the back of the kennel so that your dog must lie inside to chew on it.
5. After a few days, begin introducing a cue. Say a cue like 'kennel up' and toss treat inside. Praise as your dog eats treat and then cue him out with another cue of your choice (do not reward your dog for coming out of the crate and keep this low key).
6. Repeat step 5 numerous times until your dog enjoys going into the crate for the treat.
7. Start to cue your dog and encourage him to go in on his own. Once he is in, reward with a treat. Ensure you cue him to come out.
8. If he is hesitant to go in on his own, *wait it out*. Do not repeat the cue!
9. If your dog still will not go on his own, end the session without saying anything to your dog.
10. Try again at a later time. If your dog does go in, jackpot reward him!
11. After your dog will go into the crate on cue, begin to shut the door when he goes in. Treat repeatedly while he is in the closed crate to start. Only do small increments of time to start and then slowly increase.
12. Start to get up and walk around the crate and room while remaining in sight. Ensure you are returning to your dog often and rewarding when calm.

13. Begin increasing duration by keeping yourself busy while your dog is in the crate. Go back and reward as needed when your dog is being quiet. Ignore any fussing or whining. Never let your dog out of the crate if he is fussing. He needs to learn he can only come out when he is quiet. However, we do need to remember that we need to be mindful of building a positive association with the crate; we do not want our dog to feel panicked in the crate. If you feel that any fussing or whining is escalating to the point of panic, you may need to take a step back and work more on the early pieces of training. Please reach out to one of our positive reinforcement trainers if you have any questions.
14. Next, start going out of sight for short periods. Build this up the same as the above steps.
15. As your dog begins to use the crate more, ensure you are not just using it when you leave your dog home alone. He may begin to pair the crate with isolation and create a negative association.
16. Always teach the dog that the crate is a positive, safe place for him!

*These steps can also be used when teaching a dog to stay behind a gate or in a pen/dog run.*

Games for Crate Training:

*The following exercises and games are some good ways to make your dog's crate a happy place*

#### The Goods Are Inside:

- If you are going to give your dog a treat, puzzle toy, any exciting high value item, put the item inside the crate and close the door (dog on outside).
- Let your dog sniff, scratch, try and get to the item. You want him to be excited and desperate to get into the crate to get the item.
- Open the door and let your dog go in and get the item. It doesn't really matter if he leaves the crate with the item, but you could also fasten the item into the crate with a zip tie so that he needs to stay in there to enjoy it.  
\*\*Don't close the door.

Once you are at the stage where you can close the door, we can add the following games to build duration:

#### Busy Time:

- If you are doing chores such as folding laundry, have your dog close to you in the crate. You are near (so he does not feel isolated), he is in the crate with the door closed, perhaps with a KONG or chewy. You go about your business and ignore him. If he fusses, maybe move closer and just carry on with what you are doing. Keep it short!

#### Story Time:

- Your dog is in his crate, door closed. You sit right beside him, reading a book, working on the computer, watching TV.

With the above games we are creating the idea that being in the crate does not equal being alone. If we can associate the crate to proximity to your dog's people, he will feel better about it.

You can also try some soothing ideas to help with crate time – particularly later in the training when you might have him in there for longer:

- Cover the crate with a sheet or light blanket
- Play soft, calming music/classical music

- Snuffle mat in the crate or a snuffle mat crate pad; sniffing is calming and reduces heart rates

Important considerations when crate training:

For our dogs to be comfortable and relaxed in their crate we need to be sure that their other needs are being met.

- Physical exercise. A tired dog is less likely to get into trouble in the house. All dogs need opportunities to sniff and explore, so extra visits to the park, walks on a long line at a park or country road so that your dog can wander and sniff. Leash walks in town are important but they are not always relaxing as dogs don't have a lot of choice where they move, less time for sniffing, and all the stimulus of vehicles, bikes, people, other dogs etc. can be a little stressful for them.
- Mental exercise, brain games, enrichment, and ways for your dog to exercise his mind and practice species specific behaviour can help to settle and tire him almost as much as physical exercise.