

Crate Training

By Drs. Don McKeowen, Andrew Luescher & Mary Machum, DVM

Although many people do not like the idea of crate training, most dogs look on their crate as a den, which provides privacy, comfort and security. Crate training can be extremely useful in a variety of circumstances:

- it prevents vocalization at night, because the crate can be placed in your bedroom.
- it prevents investigative activity (chewing or destructive behaviour).
- it is the best method for house training.
- a crate trained dog will travel calmly and will not need to be tranquillized.
- crate trained dogs are happier when boarded.

The only disadvantage to crate training is that it cannot be used if the pup is isolated for long periods. The dog should never be left in the cage for more than four hours during the day, although it is fine to leave him in it all night.

Steps to Crate Training:

1. The crate should be large enough for the adult dog to stand up and turn around in. A laundry room is fine for a Great Dane.
2. The crate should be kept in the kitchen or bedroom. You may wish to keep it in the kitchen during the day and move it to the bedroom at night. It should not be left in an isolated area.
3. To start with, put treats, meals, water and toys in the crate so that the pup can go into it on his own. Try to associate the crate with pleasant experiences. *Do not use the crate as a punishment.*
4. Put the pup in the crate for a few minutes with the door closed. If the pup misbehaves, discipline it with a loud noise. Try for 10 minutes (if the pup is quiet), and then let him out. After one hour, try again for 30 minutes. If the pup is happy for this length of time, he is conditioned to be left alone. Never let the pup out of the cage, or pay attention to it if it is barking, whining, howling, or doing anything you don't want. Make a loud noise, and if he is quiet for 5 seconds let him out. This makes him learn that he cannot get out by making a fuss, and that you reward quiet behaviour with attention.
5. You may want to put a blanket over a wire cage to make it seem more like a den. Give the pup a chew toy, but something to lie on is optional.
6. Do not put food, water or a chew toy in the crate while house training the pup.

613-634-7123