



CRATE TRAINING

Crates provide safe havens and dens for dogs. They calm them and can help prevent destructive chewing, barking and housetraining mistakes.

Exercise should be given before and after any long periods in the crate, and good chew toys should be in the crate. However take care that the dog does not have a toy that they can destroy as they may then choke on small pieces.

You may want to crate your new foster dog for the first few nights in your bedroom - most of them feel more secure in their crate and it protects your house from accidents.

Crates should never be used as a means of punishment for your foster dog. If used for punishment, the dog will learn to avoid going in the crate. Except at night when you are asleep, puppies should not be left in crates for long periods. Crates should be thought of as dog play rooms - just like children's play rooms, with games and toys. It should be a place dogs like to be and feel safe and secure when they are there.

Introducing the Crate

Place the crate (with a blanket inside) in a central part of your home. Introduce your foster dog to the crate after a good walk, when he's tired and sleepy. Keep all chew toys in the crate so that he can go in and out as he pleases, selecting toys to play with. Feed your dog in the crate with the door open. If the dog hesitates going in, place the bowl inside the door so their head is in and their body is outside. Be aware that your dog will need to be let out to toilet soon after feeding.

If your foster still refuses to go near the crate, put the smelliest, tastiest wet food (or a steak!) in the crate and shut the door. Let the dog hang outside the crate for a while, smelling the food inside. Soon he should beg you to let him in!

Now that the dog is familiar and willing to go near the crate, throw some of his favourite treats in the crate. Let him go in and get them and come right out again. Do this exercise three or four times. Then, throw more treats in and let him go in and get them. When he is in, shut the door and give him another treat through the door. Then let him out and ignore him for 3 minutes. Then, put some more treats in the crate, let him go in, shut the door and feed him 5 bits of treats through the door, and then let him out and ignore him for 5 minutes.

Next time, place treats, peanut butter, freeze - dried liver or frozen food and honey in a Kong, so it is time - consuming to get the food out of the ball, and put the Kong in the crate. After your foster has gone in, shut the door and talk to him in a calm voice. If your dog starts to whine or cry, don't talk to him or you will reward the whining/crying/ barking behaviour. The foster dog must be quiet for a few minutes before you let him out.

Gradually increase the time in the crate until the dog can spend 3 - 4 hours there. You may wish to leave a radio (soothing music or talk radio) or TV on while the dog is in the crate and alone in the house.

Rotate the dog's toys from day to day so he doesn't become bored of them. Don't put papers in the crate - the dog will instinctively not go to the bathroom where he sleeps/lives. Instead, put a blanket in his crate to endorse the fact that this is his cozy home.

To help your foster get accustomed to the crate, place his favourite bed inside it and place it in your bedroom. If you're fostering a very young puppy, you can try placing a warm hot water bottle wrapped in a towel next to him. Warmth makes puppies sleepy. Be careful once the pup is old enough to start chewing.

Be wary of the temperature of your crate during hot weather - a dog may want to lie on the cool floor, instead of a blanket. Make sure the crate is not in the direct sun.