

WHY CRATE?
by Dorothy Olson

I have been crating dogs ever since our first show dog, 11 years ago. To me it is now a given, done automatically. But because we are trying to gear the Journal to all Mastiff owners, I thought I would address this question for those who would benefit from crating (their dogs), but aren't sure if it's a good thing to do.

I'll start by stating that when only one crate is open, all four of my dogs will push and shove to see who gets in. And it's a real kick to see two large dogs trying to maneuver around each other inside one crate. The crate is their secure area--a cave, a den.

I know that I can't be the only owner who has no dog runs, no basement to put a dog in, no secure area in the house that can be easily closed off. Who hasn't had to leave an untrustworthy puppy in the house ALONE? Just think shoes, rugs, electric cords, sofas--all waiting to be chewed. Have you ever seen a bathroom after a dog has been at the toilet paper? Arrrgh! My Molly once trapped herself in a bathroom and ate the molding around the doorway. Crate 'em! Then you know that your house and dog are safe.

Have a bitch in heat and you don't want her lying on your best furniture and staining your carpet? Don't want to leave her unattended in the yard for the neighbor dog to catch? Crate her!

The crate serves so many purposes. A good houseguest won't bring along a dog without a crate. It is easier for a scared child to accustom himself to a dog in a crate than one that's loose. (It gives the dog a safe place, too.) The crate is great for separating puppies when necessary. It's super for housebreaking puppies. You may have workmen going in and out of your house leaving doors open when they shouldn't. The crate was the only way to keep my male at home when the kids found a porcupine down by the stream. The pan from one of my crates is even doing double-duty under a rabbit hutch.

I would bet any "crate-er" out there could come up with at least ten other situations where a crate has saved the day. Try it! You'll like it!

P.S. To introduce puppies to a crate, I 1) put in a really yummy-doggie-smelling blanket or carpet; 2) leave the door open so they can explore it at will; 3) shut them in for only a short time at first, to avoid creating a whiner who thinks he's been abandoned forever whenever he's crated; 4) repeat a command-word each time he is put in the crate and reward him with a treat once he's inside.