

Selection and Use of Dog Crates

Our topics for this week are::

- **Uses of dog crates**
- **Types of crates**
- **Proper sizing of crate for a dog**

Crates are designed to be a safe confinement for dogs to spend time, and can be used for many purposes, including:

- Traveling
- Training
- Safety during emergencies
- Comfort and security
- Housebreaking puppies
- Limiting free roaming when direct supervision is not possible

Transport cages for temporary enclosure during travel, or crates for short term restricted activity, can be smaller. Only enough room to stand, turn around, and lay down with its legs stretched out is sufficient room, since being crated should only occupy the inactive time of the dog's day (sleeping, naps, feeding, resting) and should never exceed six to eight hours at a time (less for puppies). Crates can be made from a variety of materials, including metal, wire, plastic, or fabric.

Portable cages include rigid clamshell transport crates that can act as dens for training and help retain body heat. Wire transport cages allow for visual contact with handlers or other dogs. This is desirable when dogs are rested and interested in activity. Clamshell cages provide better seclusion for security, rest, and containment of cage contents. Wire cages are built to collapse flat for storage when not in use. Wire cages are also easier to see into to monitor for if the cage gets soiled. In addition, it allows air circulation to reduce the risk of overheating. A solid bottom tray should always be used with wire bottomed crates. Collars with tags should be removed from dogs in wire crates due to the risk of being caught on the wire and strangulation occurring. Soft-sided bags are convenient transport cages for small dogs. However, they provide less protection from injury and can be excessively confining.

Crates can be used as a source of refuge from various stresses for dogs. Placing a towel or blanket over wire crates can provide some dogs a sense of security when in the crate. Crate training puppies can reduce the risks of several behavior problems, such as house soiling, destructive chewing, digging, unnecessary barking, howling, and separation anxiety. Crate training aids in establishing the proper bond between dogs and owners since the owner is better able to control the dog's activities. The crate door should not be closed the first time the dog enters. The dog should enter voluntarily and be able to leave on its own for a couple of days before enclosing it for extended times. Soft bedding should be provided in the crate and treats offered when the dog enters the crate. Nothing adverse (no reprimands) should occur when the dog is in the crate. The dog should never be told to "come" and then shoved into the crate. Although most dogs seek out time in their crate for rest and security, inappropriate training or excessive use of crates can lead to separation anxiety and stereotypic behaviors.

Crates should be matched to the size of the dog. A crate should be large enough for the dog to easily stand up, turn around, and lay on its side with its legs outstretched, but small enough to discourage the dog from soiling the crate. Growing dogs may need to have multiple crates of various size. Matching the dog's size with a crate provides the option to carry a small dog in its crate. Although crates have top handles for carrying them when empty, the handler should use both hands in carrying a crate with a dog in it to stabilize the crate's floor. The crate to be carried with a dog in it should be covered with a towel to reduce overstimulating the dog with fear or other excitement.

If you have comments or you're interested in particular animal handling subjects, contact us at CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com

Now let's recap the key points to remember from today's episode:

- 1. Crates should be large enough to allow a dog to stand and turn around with ease and lie on its side with its legs stretched out but small enough to discourage urinating or defecating in the crate.**
- 2. Wire cages promote visibility and air circulation, but they must be covered when the crate is intended to provide rest and seclusion.**
- 3. When a dog is carried in a crate, both hands should be used under the crate to stabilize the crate as it is moved.**

More information on animal handling can be found in my books, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint*, *Concise Textbook of Small Animal Handling*, and *Concise Textbook of Large Animal Handling* all published by CRC Press and available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is provided at: www.betteranimalhandling.com . This website has more than 250 past podcasts with notes on handling of dogs, cats, other small mammals, birds, reptiles, horses, cattle, small ruminants, swine, and poultry.

Don't forget, serious injury or death can result from handling and restraining some animals. Safe and effective handling and restraint requires experience and continual practice. Acquisition of the needed skills should be under the supervision of an experienced animal handler.