



# CANINE CORRECTIONS

BEHAVIOURIST & VETERINARY NURSE

## Crate Rest/Training

Within this handout are tips to help you help your dog feel less stressed and become more accustomed and comfortable with being crated.

### **STRESS RELIEF**

To help ease stress:

- Plug in an Adaptil diffuser in the room where the crate is, at least 24 hours before the day of surgery (the longer the better). Adaptil contains natural pheromones that help to allow a dog to feel more relaxed.
- Purchase an Adaptil travel spray to spray on bedding (and your dog!) during their time in the crate. The spray is quicker acting than the diffuser but only lasts for about 4 hours at a time, so can be resprayed throughout the day.
- Some dogs react better to calming scents rather than pheromones. Pet Remedy contains velarium which is known to help ease stress. Lavender sprays can also be used as this is also a natural calming scent.
- Place an item of clothing (e.g. tshirt) that you have worn to bed, unwashed, in the dogs crate, so that it smells like you. This allows the dog to still feel close to you during their time of separation from their usual environment.

### **TRAINING**

It is important to make the crate accessible and welcoming. Forcing your dog into a crate will only cause more stress. Make the crate a 'safe place' by doing the following:

- Placing the crate in a room where you are most likely to be, (e.g. the living room) or where your dog usually spends the most time. This allows us to keep one constant within the recovery period. Remember, you can also have another crate upstairs or in a different room at night if your dog is used to sleeping somewhere else.
- Placing your dogs bed in the crate. Works best with one they are used to and have been using rather than a new one. This encourages the dog to venture into the crate to use their bed.
- Covering half of the crate with a towel/blanket/sheet. This helps to make the crate feel safer.
- Feed your dog in the crate. Rather than feeding your dog in the normal place, place your dogs food bowl in the crate.
- Leaving the door open so that your dog can go in and out of the crate as they please. Remember to reward when going in to the crate! Giving your dog a small piece of their favourite food (e.g. chicken) or using low fat high protein high value treats (such as Pet Munchies Training Treats) whilst still in the crate, will help them to associate the crate with being rewarded. Try closing the door at times that they are calm in the crate, followed by receiving a treat through the crate.

#### **How to get your dog in the crate:**

- Once all the above has been set in place, if your dog has not already ventured into the crate, gently encourage by throwing favourite treats or favourite toys into the crate for your dog to go in and collect.

- Try offering a treat through the crate, so your dog has to go into the crate to collect the treat through the bars.
- Once your dog is in the crate, REWARD! The longer they stay in the crate, the more treats they can get (spread each treat apart by about 5 seconds, longer if your dog will allow!) Make sure your dog sees this as a game, rather than something they are being forced to do. If you cut out treats throughout the day, and only treat if your dog goes in the crate, they will soon catch on that to get their favourite titbit, they must go into their crate. (Just as they caught on with the sit command when they were younger!)
- Once your dog is comfortable with going into the crate, try closing the door behind them, then treating for calm behaviour. (If you have used clicker training before and your dog is already associated with this, then you can team clicker training up with the crate training to make it more clear to your dog what the wanted behaviour is).
- Once your dog is used to having the door shut, try walking away and coming back. Again, with a reward through the crate for calm behaviour. (You can use the 'stay' command to help reinforce this if your dog already knows it). Remember, they won't be able to have the door open to come and go as they please after surgery, so it's really important that we try to get them feeling as comfortable in the crate as we can.

Try to do the above as many times a day as you can, making sure to stop if the dog becomes stressed (so as not to associate the crate with stress!) If your dog becomes stressed, go back a step, or take each step a little slower. (See signs of stress handout for how to tell if your dog is getting uncomfortable).

It is really important to use **LOW FAT HIGH PROTEIN** treats for this training. Low fat and high protein treats allow your dog to have that little bit more treats for training without worrying too much about weight, and also allows for added protein in the diet. The Canine Corrections store sells Pet Munchies Training Treats which are perfect for this! [www.caninecorrectionsstore.co.uk](http://www.caninecorrectionsstore.co.uk)

Hopefully, at this point, your dog should be more associated with the crate and be comfortable with getting in and out of it. By keeping the crate in regularly used rooms, your dog shouldn't feel too alone, and should hopefully enjoy their own space with their bed and toys.

However, the next issue is how to keep your dog from getting bored! Due to not being with you and not being able to do much in the crate, your dog is at risk of getting bored and becoming destructive, stressed or hurting themselves. To minimise this, there are a few things we can put in place:

- **Puzzle Feeders:** These not only slow down your dogs eating so that their meal times last longer, but also make your dog use their brain to work out HOW to get their food.
- **New Toys and Smells:** Placing a new toy into the crate gives the dog something new to smell and enjoy. Further enrichment can be achieved by spraying the toy with a perfume, rubbing an item of clothing on the toy that you have worn to work (so that it smells of a different place) etc. This encourages your dog to sniff intensely, and this not only stimulates their brain, but is also a natural calming behaviour, so will also help your dog feel more relaxed.
- **Challenging Toys:** Rope toys wedged into the crate (low down so that the dog has to lay down to play) can help to keep your dog mentally stimulated, and allows them to choose to play when they please.
- **Mental Stimulation Games:** There are also games that you can play with your dog that involve no physical activity but lots of brain activity. Doing these even just once a day for about 15 minutes allow your dog to still use their brain and feel more relaxed and settled afterwards.