

Bimberg Reg'd Boxers

Crate Training

Most people do not recognize an important advantage of crate training. It does more than just stop the puppy from messing in the house. It also teaches the puppy something very important. The puppy learns that when the urge to urinate or defecate occurs, he can hold it. Just because the puppy feels like he needs to relieve himself, the pup learns that he does not have to. This is thought to be the main reason why puppies that have gone through crate training have fewer mistakes later on.

Make sure you buy the right size crate. You want one that has the floor space that provides just enough for the puppy to lie down. A typical boxer fits into a 400 plastic crate or a 2' x 3' suitcase crate. Crates are useful throughout a dog's life and it would be nice if you did not have to keep buying more as he grows. Simply purchase a crate that will be big enough for him as an adult, but choose a model that comes with or has a divider panel as an accessory. With these, you can adjust the position of the panel so that the space inside the crate available to the pet can grow as he does.

Getting Started

Place the crate in a quiet area. I suggest your bedroom for the first few months until bladder control is strong enough where you do not need to take the puppy outside during the night. The crate should be set up and ready for your puppy long before he comes home. Have a nice soft blanket inside the crate and do not keep food and water in the crate outside of schedule feeding times. During the day, having a special 'crate toy' is a good idea. No toys should be in the crate at night as your puppy must learn that night time is sleeping time.

Introducing your puppy to the crate should be a low key affair. Keep a container of treats handy as these will be very important for the first few months. Place your puppy inside the crate and shut the door. Praise your puppy lavishly and keep feeding treats through the door to your puppy. After about a minute, open the door and cheer. That was great! Your puppy had his first positive experience in his crate.

The First Night

Routines are very important for puppies and it's best if you start off from the moment your puppy comes home. The first night will always be a stressful one. Your puppy has left his comfort zone, left his siblings and left his mom. He will cry that first night and it will be heart wrenching, but the worst thing you can do is let him out. Not only have you taught your puppy that crying will get him what

he wants, but you are also depriving him of a routine to get comfortable with. Make sure you properly potty your puppy before bed so you know the crying is not potty related. If you aren't sure and think it might be potty related, take your puppy out and go directly outside. After pottyng he needs to go directly back in his crate. For the first few nights, place the crate beside your bed so you can slip your fingers in the crate to offer comfort. Speak in soothing tones and just wait for the crying to pass. It shouldn't be long before he settles down to sleep. Be strong! It's not easy, but standing your ground will make the whole process much smoother.

Daily Crate Use

To get your puppy established in his crate there are a number of things you can do. Basically, you want good things to happen in his crate. A crate should never be used for punishment. Feed all meals inside his crate with the door shut. After placing him and his meal in the crate, leave him for 15 mins to eat and digest. After 15 mins, let him out of his crate and take him directly outside if he is being quiet. If he is barking or making a ruckus, ignore him until he is quiet. Only allow your puppy to leave the crate after at least 1 minute of silence and good behavior.

A 'crate toy' is a toy that is enjoyed by your puppy only when he is in a crate. This is another incentive for your puppy to feel comfortable in his crate. Crate toys are toys that require long term attention from your puppy. Neck bones, a favorite squeaky toy, Kongs filled with treats; all these are examples of good crate toys. Kongs are wonderful when filled with peanut butter and treats and then frozen. Your puppy will happily work for hours to lick out all those goodies. Using a crate toy will focus your puppy's attention on something other than his confinement and act as a reward for being crated.

If your puppy eliminates in his crate the first question you should ask is why. How long ago was his last elimination? What is his usual schedule? Were you not paying attention? Puppies will not soil their crates deliberately and will try to avoid it as much as possible. If you have an accident, discover the why, clean it up, and make sure it doesn't happen again. If you are taking your puppy outside regularly this should never happen. Remember, he should only cry that first night. If you have made the crate a happy place and he has no problem being in it, crying indicates he probably needs to potty. If you keep an ear out you will be able to distinguish between the "let me out I want to play" cries and the "oh my gosh I need to pee!" cries.

Keep the crate clean. Change blankets at least twice a week and disinfect the crate once a week. If you have a suitcase crate this will be very easy as you can just pull out the tray and wipe it down. Plastic crates will require a bit more effort to disinfect. A plastic crate needs the floors, sides, and ceiling of the crate disinfected. A mild bleach solution, orange cleaner, or even a vinegar solution will disinfect the crate nicely.