

## **Breeder's Corner**

### **Puppy Proofing Your Home / Crate Training A Lesson Re-Learned By a Breeder**

By Greg Copeland

Whenever we send new puppies to their new homes, we also send an article on puppy proofing your home and crate training. We strongly recommend anyone bringing a new puppy into their home to take the time to puppy proof their home and to crate train their puppy. By the time someone picks up a puppy from our kennel, we have already started the process of crate training -- completing the process in the pup's new home should be quickly and easily accomplished. You can see how easy it is to get started crate training from the photo of all nine of the pups of a recent litter piled into the much smaller of the two crates we provide in their space. This is not staged (how could it be) - they do this fairly often, we just happen to have a camera handy this time. Their crate should always be a safe, secure and happy place.



We always encourage folks to take their puppy home when they are going to have the time at home to spend with it to get it acclimated to its new home, do crate training, create a routine and generally have time to orient both the new owner and the new pup. Fortunately most do plan to take time off or will have someone around to do all this.

Now to brand spanking new testimony as to why we believe all the above to be so important.

The photo below exhibits why we so strongly believe in puppy proofing your home, crate training and spending as much time as possible in the first week or two acclimating your pup to its new home. We had all the pups (6 weeks old) of a litter outside one morning and took advantage of the moment to multitask -- we cleaned their area (for the third time by 7:30 am)

and also fed all the adult dogs. We went to investigate when we heard pups gagging. Three of them had eaten bits of twigs, leaves and such which were tickling their little throats. We cleared out their throats with a gentle swab of the index finger and they were all OK. No problems. It happens all too often that this breed will get something foreign in their mouths -- this is a retriever breed after all and they will put anything and everything in their mouths. And being mouthy retrievers they will also chew – but that is another story. This is a story and a lesson as to why young puppies need to be closely supervised at this very young tender age.

As we were bringing in the rest of the puppies, one started gagging and would not stop. The pup was in obvious distress with labored breathing and excessively rapid heart beats. We yanked him off the floor and his breathing was almost stopped as I put my finger down his throat and found what I thought to be a small twig. I started pulling the twig which became a stick 9 inches long (see photo)... Keep in mind that at this age the puppy is only about 10 inches long from his throat to his butt, but somehow he had managed to completely swallow the stick length wise.



All is well and the puppy is great and back to being a puppy, but it could have been much worse if we had not been paying attention. Of course it could have been no problem at all had we followed our own advice and not left such young puppies unattended but had put them in their confined space or CRATES before going off to do other things. Sometimes you just want to beat yourself...and my wife would say deservedly so and did offer to do just that.

Now that you are reminded of why you should puppy proof your home, crate train your puppy and not leave it unattended, we are reprinting articles to remind you how and why to do both.

## **Puppy-Proof Your Home**

### **General Tips**

Like babies, puppies need constant supervision. However, you do not need to give your puppy access to all parts of your home.

Until he knows the house rules, confine your puppy to an easily cleaned area where you can keep a watchful eye on him.

### **Gate or crate**

Puppy gates are available at pet-supply stores; simply place them in a doorway as you would a baby gate (they work for puppies, too). Or buy a properly sized crate for your dog; especially if you plan to travel with your dog, a crate is an excellent idea. Think of it as your dog's home kennel, or an indoor doghouse; dogs generally see their crates as their personal space and, with training, will willingly go there on command.

To be on the safe side, until you know your puppy's jumping and wriggling abilities, remind everyone in the household to close doors to rooms with temptations like open wastebaskets and low toy bins. A New York couple came home one afternoon to find their Jack Russell puppy happily exploring an off-limits room; he'd learned to jump over the gate in the doorway.

### **Rooms to avoid**

It's not a good idea to confine your untrained puppy to the bathroom, garage, or yard. In the bathroom, she may be tempted to drink from the toilet. Beyond the fact that the water is unsanitary, there's the danger of her falling in and drowning, and the water can contain a harmful bowl-cleaner residue. Your garage is probably full of potentially lethal substances like antifreeze and insecticides. And the yard is dangerous to a curious puppy, not only because of swimming pools, fishponds, poisonous or spiky plants, and gardening implements, but also because of wild animals (large or small), birds of prey, and sharp twigs (remember, puppies love to chew!).

### **At floor level**

To get a puppy's eye view of the areas of your home where your new pet will have free access, get down on your hands and knees. Whatever you see that's within reach, assume that your puppy will want to taste.

Some puppies will chew on anything and everything; others are more selective. One Brooklyn family thought their puppy hadn't chewed anything for weeks—until the day they noticed that the lowest bookcase shelf had a row of tiny teeth marks in it!

Puppies are also great at wriggling into improbable spaces. So for at least the first few days, you may want to block off areas, like under a couch, where they could get stuck.

### **Safety Zone**

For the place where the dog spends time alone, these tips will help you create a "puppy-proof" area. If you're a parent, much of this advice will seem familiar from when your baby became mobile.

- Place electrical wires out of reach; if necessary, tape down wires to keep them out of the way. Unplug appliances when not in use, and do not let the cords dangle. You may even want to put plastic safety plugs in unused outlets to prevent adventurous sniffing or licking.

- Make sure lethal substances like household cleaners, bleach, insecticides, fertilizers, mothballs, and antifreeze are locked away or out of reach.
- Place all plants well out of your puppy's reach, for the plant's sake and for the health of your dog. Some plants are poisonous to pets, but "very few are very dangerous to dogs; most, like poinsettias and some of the ivies, can cause gastric or stomach upset if ingested," advises Duane Schnittker, DVM.
- Most homes have an accumulation of books, magazines, shoes, jackets, and shopping bags on or near the floor. As much as is practical, put everything you don't want chewed away in a cabinet or on a high shelf.
- Check the floor and low shelves for small objects like pins, needles, bottle caps, and little toys and knick-knacks, and move them.
- Cover your garbage container with a tight lid. Dogs generally see garbage as a canine smorgasbord. And things that seem harmless (not to mention unappetizing) to you can be tasty but toxic for your dog. This list includes things like the seed pits of apples, apricots, cherries, peaches, pears, and plums.
- Keep in mind that tablecloths and dangling runners can be pulled down. If you use these items, consider keeping your untrained puppy out of the eating area, particularly if fragile and/or heavy objects are on the table.
- Window-blind cords should be tied or taped up to prevent chewing or strangulation.

### **Puppy Playthings**

Keep play time safe with these tips:

- Buy several chew toys, so you can offer them as an alternative when you catch your puppy chewing on something forbidden. Select the appropriate size for your dog right now, not a large size he may need after he's grown. (Similarly, don't give your dog toys that are small enough for him to swallow.)
- Praise your dog when you find her chewing on something appropriate.
- Check that the eyes on stuffed pet toys are tightly attached and that squeakers are not easily removed.
- If you give your dog stuffed toys designed for children, be especially careful to check the label to make sure they're stuffed with nontoxic material, and supervise your dog when she's playing with them. Toys for humans are not designed to be attacked by sharp little teeth; they may easily disintegrate.
- Although it sounds like a cute idea, don't let puppies play with old shoes. The shoes may contain small parts that could be harmful if swallowed, and chewing on shoes can become a lifelong bad habit, since dogs don't differentiate between old and new shoes.

### **Crate Training**

Crate training is the most effective and humane way to house train a pup.

- Get your puppy comfortable with a crate by first giving it a treat in the crate, then advance to feeding in the crate until it is happy about being in its crate.
- Gradually extend the amount of time your pup spends in the crate.

- When you let your pup out, use praise for the pup being good in the crate.
- Be consistent and keep your pup on a regular schedule.
- Never use a crate for punishment – the crate should be a safe and happy place.

There are a lot of misconceptions about Crate Training. First of all, all dogs are DEN animals. That means that in the wild, dogs seek out den type homes to snooze in, breed in, hide in and just hang out. They like dens. Terriers in particular adore small cozy dens.

Our Boykins race for the smallest of the crates, cram themselves into boxes two sizes too small, hunker under low furniture, etc. Where we would be claustrophobic; they are rather pleased with themselves in being first to get in the smallest space possible.

Crates are the human imitation of the den. It is a safe place for the dogs to hang out if they prefer. It is a safe place at night for them to sleep in. It is a safe place for a younger dog to snooze in if the family has to run to the grocery store.

What a crate is NOT:

- A. It is NOT a place of punishment if they do something wrong.
- B. It is NOT a jail cell for solitary confinement while the owners go off to work during the day.

We have crates. All our puppies are raised in an enormous crate in our Home from the time they begin to wobble around on their legs. It keeps them safe. It makes it very easy to keep them clean and we can supervise them constantly. As soon as they can wobble pretty well, they are outside in the grass with someone watching them. Soon, they each have their own crate and only sleep in the crate. If they are awake, they are outside, learning about playing and more types of human/dog social interaction.

There is a reason that puppies must be raised in an environment as similar as possible to a real den. Dogs will do anything not to soil their dens. Puppies learn this very early on. It is a part of their dog psychology. By raising them in a crate/den like environment and taking them outside as often as possible, they learn to contain their body functions in order to keep their den clean. If a breeder takes advantage of this inherent part of the puppy's psychology, then they will have a very easy time of house training the puppies.

All our puppies are or will be crate trained. They will do anything to keep it clean. However, we must do my part. Our puppies are on a regular schedule so that everyone knows what to expect. We feed them at set times because food stimulates the movement of the bowels within 5 to 50 minutes depending on the pup and its age. As soon as they have finished eating, they are carried outside and encouraged to do their "business". They are taken out last thing at night and at the crack of dawn in the morning and a few times during the day. When we had carpet, we would carry the puppies because at this young age carpet and flooring are indistinguishable from dirt and grass to them. They may not differentiate between them until they are about 12 weeks old. In order to avoid potty training problems in the future, we do not let any bad habits

start. By the time they are 12 weeks old, it is possible to extend that sense of "den" to include the entire house, little by little, room by room.

That is also why we refuse to use newspapers. Why start training them with something that will have to be unlearned later on? Will the puppy always have a slight hesitation in using the Sunday newspaper left lying around in the future? Better to never start that habit.

To Repeat:

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- Gradually extend the amount of time your pup spends in the crate.
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### More Testimony

Just when you thought the puppy stage was about over and you no longer had to be concerned about puppy proofing or keeping your eye on them every second of every minute...something happens. Below is a photo of what had to be surgically removed from one puppy. This is only half of what the pup ate as it threw up a piece equally as large. The owners of this pup are the best and had fully puppy proofed their home, but in the blink of an eye their puppy had eaten the two tips of a robe belt which hung in the back of their closet. The pup ate these in only a minute or so when they had their eyes off her.



We have been lucky so far as we have had many near misses but not yet had to resort to surgery for this type of incident. We hope you remain as lucky and as watchful.