

How to Housebreak Your Puppy

by Hal Wheeler

Many people and especially “Mom” object to acquiring a new puppy because of the seemingly difficult job of housebreaking—not to mention the damage and expense of soiled floors and carpeting. This article will offer the easiest, most simple method of housebreaking. One that will take the “chore” out of the job and one that will make for a happy, well-adjusted pup.

Housebreaking in theory is very simple. It is finding a means of **preventing** the puppy from doing his duties in the house and giving him only an opportunity to do it outside. A dog is a strong creature of habit and because he learns by association, he will soon know there is no other place to relieve himself but the great outdoors and good old terra firma.

The trick then, is to find this magic means of prevention. Here we take advantage of a very natural instinct of the dog—his desire to keep his sleeping quarters clean—i.e. not to mess his bed. It only follows that if we can devise a bed that he cannot get out of—then presto—he is going to stay clean. Add to this a common sense schedule of being taken from his bed to outside and we have the perfect answer to housebreaking.

The Crate

First the bed that he cannot get out of—this is known as a crate—a cage just large enough for him to comfortably lie down in. If you are appalled by the idea of confining him to a cage, let me dispel any idea of cruelty. You are actually catering to a very natural desire on the part of the dog. In his wild state, does a dog, when he beds down for the night, lie down in the middle of an open field where other animals can pounce on him? No—he finds a cave or trunk of a tree where he has a feeling of security—a sense of protection. With a crate, this is what you are providing. Then too, think of it as a means to an end. He is only going to use it for a few short weeks and with frequent and lengthening periods of freedom he proves himself to be reliable.

The Schedule

And now to the important part—the common sense schedule we men-



tioned earlier. We'll start with the last thing at night. Bedtime for the puppy: Take the puppy out and give him an opportunity to do his duties (if possible, and you are in a protected area, let him go free of the leash. Very often to start with, the leash can be sufficient restriction to keep him from doing his duties.) If necessary, use a suppository and be sure to praise him when he has completed his duties. Take him inside at once and put him in his bed (the crate).

The first thing in the morning (and I mean the first thing) **pick him up** and take him outside. He's been clean all night—and holding it all night—he should do his duties in a hurry. Now bring him in and give him freedom, but in the kitchen only. A child's gate at the kitchen doorway is an excellent barrier to the other rooms in the house. Give him this freedom while breakfast is being prepared and while you are eating breakfast. After **your** breakfast, and when you have time to take him out, feed him **his** breakfast—and take him out immediately. Remember the rule . . . outside after each meal.

Now bring him in and put him in his crate and go about your normal routine of the morning. He should stay in the crate until about 11:00 to 11:30 am. Then out of the crate and outside. Bring him in, and while you are preparing and eating lunch, let him have the freedom of the kitchen only, for an hour or two. Follow this with a quick trip outside. Then back in and into the crate until 4:00 or 4:30 pm.

It is now time to feed him his dinner. To save yourself an extra trip outside, feed him in the crate and as soon as he has finished his last mouthful—take him outside. After he has completed his duties, bring him in and again give him the freedom of the kitchen while you are preparing dinner and during the dinner hour. Give him another trip outside about 8:00 pm—and again just before your bedtime.

Increasing Freedom

Keep up this 24-hour schedule for at least two weeks, so that by prevention in the house and repetition of the habit of doing his duties outside, he has the first association with the proper place to relieve himself. You can now start increasing his freedom out of the crate. Do this by first giving him freedom in the morning—but again, only in the kitchen. If he remains clean then the next day try freedom in the afternoon. It is only thru these testing periods, that you will know when he has arrived at the point of being reliable.

