

## ADJUSTING YOUR DOG TO BEING ALONE

*When first in a new home, many dogs will initially show signs of anxiety and stress when left alone. For them to be able to relax when on their own, it is important to start working with your dog as soon as possible to get them adjusted. In the long run this will make it better on your dog's mental wellbeing, your own stress, and that of your neighbors (if they bark/scratch/whine). We recommend using a crate to prevent a stressed dog from getting into anything dangerous or destroying things in the home, but these steps can also be tailored to use without a crate (for example, confining them to a gated area or a closed room). The more gradual you can be with these steps, the more likely for success in the long term. Adjustment takes time, and some dogs learn more quickly than others. It may also be helpful to tire your dog out on a long walk before these steps, so they are more ready to relax.*

### GETTING USED TO BEING IN THE CRATE

- 1.** Make the crate comfortable with a blanket or towels but use something you do not mind being destroyed (in case of potty accidents, shredding, chewing). Keep the crate open and put very high value (not normal treats, something exciting and smelly and something they ONLY get during this training to associate good things) treats in the crate. Examples of this include cut up bits of hot dog, cold cuts, or string cheese. Once they enter to eat the treats, drop more treats from the top into the crate so it is “raining” treats.
- 2.** Continue to drop high value treats in the crate randomly throughout the day. Do it when they are not looking as well, so they begin to check the crate on their own to see what awesome treats may be waiting for them.
- 3.** Stuff a Kong toy with high value treats, peanut butter, or wet food and give it as an exciting puzzle treat in the crate (door stays open)
- 4.** Feed all meals in the crate so that your dog begins to build a positive association with it. Every exciting meal happens in the crate. The crate becomes a positive place.
- 5.** Do not physically put the dog in the crate or close the door to the crate for at least the first day, but ideally until they have been consistently eating meals in the crate and are used to a routine of it.
- 6.** Your dog may naturally begin to bring toys in the crate or elect to take naps in the open crate- If this happens, reward with treats in the crate!

## GETTING USED TO BEING ALONE

1. Repeat treat exercises or give a treat Kong. Once your dog is relaxed and eating the Kong or food, shut the crate door for 2 seconds and then open it again. If they leave the crate when you open it, throw more treats in and repeat. If they remain relaxed, try closing the door for 5 seconds, opening and giving treats. Next, try 10 seconds, then 20 seconds. Work up through about 1 minute this way. \*Do not increase time duration if your dog is showing signs of stress or trying to escape. We want this to remain a positive experience and if you move too quickly, you could set them back by creating negative memories associated to the crate.
2. Once your dog is able to focus on the Kong/food in the crate for 1 full minute with you in the room, step out of the room for 30 seconds. Make sure the Kong is still full when you leave so they can focus on eating it. If your dog is relaxed for 30 seconds without sight of you, enter the room and let them out of the crate. Next time, double the duration you are out of the room to 1 minute.
3. If at any point your dog starts to whine, bark, scratch to get out, wait until there is a small break in the behavior (even a second) and let them out of the crate. Go back to your last successful step and duration and repeat that.
4. Build upon this duration of leaving the room in increments throughout the day until you can fully leave the house. For example, start with 2 minutes, then work up to 5 minutes. Increase increments of time by a few minutes at a time until you can leave them for 30 minutes without them panicking.
5. Once they can be alone comfortably for 30 minutes, you can try leaving them alone in the crate for more extended periods of time, leaving something like a stuffed Kong in with them to keep them occupied!

### KEEP IT UP

Once your dog is comfortable being alone, continue to keep your dog in a routine of leaving them crated or alone for periods of time regularly. If you get them used to being alone and then never leave them alone for a long period of time (days, weeks, months) they could regress and you'd need to start the process over again based on their comfort levels and durations they can tolerate.