

## **MY MOMMA SAYS “LIFE IS LIKE A BOXED UP PUPPY!”**

By: Dr. Douglas R. Yearout  
All Animal and Bird Clinic  
Everett, Washington, USA  
[www.holisticanimaldoc.com](http://www.holisticanimaldoc.com)  
All Rights Reserved

Q. Sometimes my pet is destructive when I leave, or has accidents in the house. I want to crate him up to avoid that. How long can I leave him in the crate?

A. Crate training is a very safe and effective method of positively reinforcing wanted behaviors. The crate teaches them boundaries, and acts as a remote pet sitter in your absence. Young dogs and cats feel very safe and secure in their nest box, or the place called their den. It reminds them of warm snuggies, mom, and a full tummy. If puppies and kittens are given a crate, or an airline kennel to be used to sleep in, and it is used with regularity, they will ultimately become more amenable to training. They know they are supposed to be good when in the den! You can more easily take them with you on trips, and as long as they have their crate with their bed inside they will have a little piece of home to feel comfortable in. They will be more calm, and easier to manage in strange situations. The crate must be large enough to have room for a litter pan for cats, and not too large so that dogs will want to soil their bed area. Dogs will wait to be let out as long as possible before they will make a mess in their own bed. Puppies kept in larger kennels, cages, or runs, and not allowed to get outside on the soil to do their business regularly will be very difficult to house train as they will not learn to go outside to eliminate. They instead become habituated to going just outside their sleeping area. Training crates are not designed to live in, but are for temporary safety and security in the home or when traveling.

How long is too long to stay in the crate? Dogs should be let out to stroll and ponder every 2-4 hours on a long trip if possible. Water should be provided at all times, with a good normal meal each day, and a walk after that. If pets are kept in the crate for too long it no longer becomes a safety zone, but becomes a prison. Long term negative psychological and behavioral effects occur from being shut up too long just as a chained up animal suffers all of its life.

The best use of a crate is to secure your pet for a few hours while you cannot supervise them. The crate will keep the dog from destructive activity in the house, or getting into general trouble if he suffers from separation anxiety. It is easier to house train a dog with crate training. The dog should be continually observed, interacted and played with, and walked often. When you are busy or diverted to other issues, crate the dog to avoid those accidents. As soon as you let him out take him immediately outside, and house training will be solved in a very short time.