

the **TwoByFour** NY Monthly Online NEWS LETTER

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Crate versus Jail.

As a dog walker & pet sitter I see more than most how many people house their dogs. Overall, it is pretty good. Whether dogs have a dog bed, a private nook, a room, are under a piece of furniture, or in a crate, it doesn't really matter as long as the dog is safe, happy, and it is okay with the dog's owner.

I do find that many people crate their dogs and that's fine as long as the crate is roomy enough for the dog. Many people have crate trained their dogs as puppies and simply bought a larger roomier crate as the dog grew. Rarely do these dog owners actually close the crate door. Well balanced and a well crate trained dogs usually prefer the crate to sleep and relax in than any other spaces. It's what they're familiar with. It's cozy. It's theirs. Something they could call their own; if they could.

The issue for some dog owners is how a crate is used. Unfortunately, I've seen crates used as jails where dog owners aren't able to, or have knowledge enough, to control their dogs... Or worse, use a crate to punish them by locking them inside.

There are always times that putting a dog within a crate and closing the door is a good thing. If you're having a party with lots of people and you're afraid your dog wouldn't cope or might wander off, your dog might actually prefer the security of being in a crate. Or if strangers like a repairman, or several contractors are working and coming & going, crating the dog might once again be beneficial. Or even if for some reason you need to transport your dog, say on a bus or airplane, you'd want your dog to be comfortable being placed within a crate or carrier. But to punish a dog for excessive barking, or getting "excited", or making on a

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(Cont. from previous column)

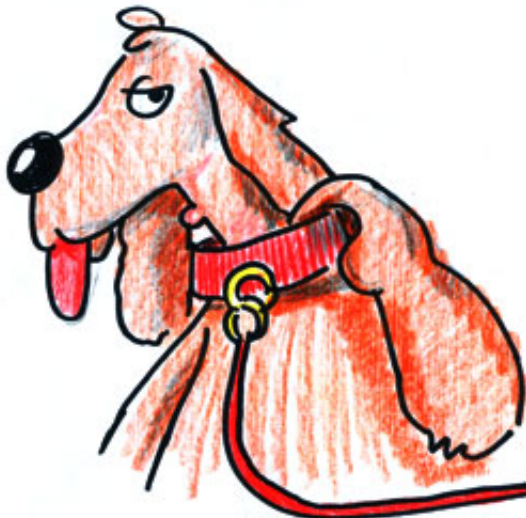
aggressive Alpha dogs may be roaming, or if a small child or light weight individual may need a little more "umph" for a large dog to recognize that they have tweaked the leash.

Notice I said "tweaked". I didn't say "Yanked the Crap out of the LEASH". That is NOT what Choke and Prong collars are supposed to be used for. A gentle and quick tightening pull on the leash should be enough for a quick correction of a dog or remind the dog that YOU are there. It is important to remind yourself that MOMMA dog trained her PUPPIES by gently biting and picking up

carpet, or jumping up, or ANYTHING... is wrong. Putting a dog in a crate sends the wrong message to a dog about what a crate is and it isn't like sending a child to his/her room unless the room was a 3 by 3 foot square cage. Nobody would do that. But everybody has let a kid play in an empty cardboard box. Get it? Purpose & intent makes a big difference.

Dogs basically want to please their owners. Dog's don't do things for spite. They're smart but let's not give them too much credit. So when you punish a behavior instead of correcting a behavior you're going to see that behavior return again and again, making both you and your dog miserable.

So bottom line, dog crating gets a bad rap because some people use it like a jail. Remember that the dog will continue doing whatever they are being punished for often because getting thrown in jail and not understanding why and what to do to be better is NOT A SOLUTION to a problem. A crate should be a safe place to go. A cozy and familiar home for a dog, so for those times when they have to be placed within it and have it closed for their protection and safety, it's okay to crate. Just do it with love NOT correction.



Getting a Little Tight Around the Collar

Here's another touchy subject, dog collars. No not the simple nylon or leather ones that clip or buckle around a dog's neck (and hopefully have the dog's identifying information attached, with info of how to contact the owner). I'm talking about TRAINING COLLARS. Like: Choke Chains, Pinch Prong Collars, Leader Halters, and Gentle Harnesses.

Dog owners have very different ideas and views about these training collars and leaders; some are very

their babies by the neck. Choke & Prong Collars, properly used, very much remind a dog of MOM.

It is important that if you do use a Choke or Prong Collar that YOU be trained in its use. I have myself seen ILL BEHAVED dogs lives saved with people using Pinch Prong Collars, where otherwise a big dog with "issues" would have been otherwise EUTHANIZED.

As far as, Leader Halters and Gentle Halter Harnesses are concerned, I think those are dangerous. Sure it looks humane, but it isn't a good way to control a dog. With Leader Halters if a dog lunges, the Leader would whip the dog's head around causing neck and spine damage. If a dog with a Leader Halter starts biting, then the best a handler can do is pull the biting mouth TOWARD them. Not the best of situations. And even if your dog is well behaved imagine rubbing your nose on the ground to smell something only to have a big leash buckle attachment always sticking into your face. And those Harnesses work great for WORKING DOGS who have been bred to PULL ON THEM. Great idea to put a leash on a dog harness so that your dog can drag you around and pull on even harder when you add a little more resistance. Hauling tree logs are we?

So let's be honest about this collars thing. People who use Choke & Pinch Prong Collars aren't the devil. You don't have to use one, that's fine. But whatever you do you GET TRAINED on how to use the collar mechanism you do pick. Even Choke collars can be used correctly, but if put on backwards, it can strangle a dog because the tension can't release properly. Taking care of a dog is hard work and what people need to know doesn't come to us naturally or through osmosis. Reading and getting proper training is important. In my small way I hope these ON-LINE NEWSLETTERS help.



HAVE A QUESTION or a SUGGESTION for an UPCOMING NEWSLETTER?

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strong and emotional. I understand completely. Unfortunately, a lot of it reminds me of many people's conceptions of dog crating. It is always those people who abuse something that makes using something correctly seem equally as bad.

So let's get a few things out of the way. EVERYBODY is entitled to pick a collar that they feel is appropriate to handling their dog or dogs. Most dogs are well behaved, and both they and owners are well trained, so those dogs don't need to use choke or Prong Collars. But when used properly, choke & prong collars are great training tools and make fine collars – especially when a dog may need a little extra control, like when walking through large noisy crowds, crossing unfamiliar heavily traffics street, in areas where strange or...

(cont. next column)



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