**Puppy essentials: Crates and Playpens**

**Crates**

A crate is in essence your dog’s den – a safe place for them to curl up in and have some peace and quiet. Even adult dogs often love having the option of a crate. Young pups generally will take to a crate straight away at night, as it is quiet but, in the day, will need gradual crate training as the context is different, daytime is a fun time where people are around. Pairing up the crate with receiving tasty food in a Kong, puppy will begin to view the crate as an enjoyable place to be. Crates should never be a punishment zone, or a ‘naughty step’.

**Play pens**

A play pen is a great way to help your dog learn to play by themselves, spend short periods alone during the day and find some independence. It also allows you to get on with your day and not worry about what they are doing.

Introducing them to the play pen properly is important; it must never be used as a punishment and should always be seen as something positive. The best way to do this is to give them something nice in the pen so they associate the pen with treats or toys and fun times. E.g. a Kong stuffed with tasty meat. Put your puppy in there for short periods while they have this treat, and then let them back out. When they are happily playing, lying down or chewing, give plenty of praise. As your puppy gets more and more used to its pen you can leave them in there for longer periods. Work up the time slowly and eventually move away from the pen and leave your puppy to play on their own.

**Add some music**

Classical, soft rock and reggae music has been proven to help calm dogs down, so it is a good idea to have this playing on a low volume when you are not around, ‘Through a Dogs Ear’ CDs are specially designed to help dogs relax in various situations.

**Sofa rules**

Puppies don’t automatically know where we are happy for them to go in our homes, and for a puppy a sofa is a warm cosy comfy place that smells of us so is very attractive. If you’d prefer your puppy to not get on an item of furniture, the first step is to restrict their access to prevent them from doing so – prevention is better than cure!

You will need to put into place careful management e.g. putting obstacles on the sofa to stop puppy being able to climb up, and ensure puppy is supervised at all times and not left alone in those rooms. Encourage your puppy to do what you want them to do instead, which is lie in their beds, to do this give puppy lots of praise when they are in their bed and get them used to settling in there with a chew stick or Kong. Puppies like to be near their owners, so having their bed by the sofa can increase the likelihood of them settling as they are close to you.

To get a dog off the sofa, crouch down and encourage them to you, or walk out the room and make a distraction noise in another room to gain their attention. Never tell your puppy off for being on the sofa, or try to pull them off by their collars, as this will create a fearful association with you approaching them and could create a negative association with having their collars touched – remember to set puppy up for success!