



- by GAC's Darren Rigg

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## **Part I**

Many greyhound adoption agencies encourage crate usage. Some insist that adopters purchase a dog crate when they get a greyhound. Even a number of respected books about greyhound adoption promote crating. At the Greyhound Adoption Center, we advise against it.

Proponents of crate usage espouse that dogs are pack animals in need of a den or safe haven, which the crate becomes. Further, they say, a crate keeps a dog safe and prevents it from doing harm inside a home or hurting itself. They fuel their side of the argument by saying many animal shelters suggest crating and many dog behaviorists favor the practice, too.

Opponents see it differently. They don't argue with the idea of confining a dog, especially a puppy, for training and safety purposes. They do not, though, believe in making dogs live for extended periods in what is essentially a small box. As a matter of fact, some of those against crating argue that restricting a large adult dog this way can lead to behavior problems, rather than reduce them. They explain that the crate causes the dog to feel excluded from its "pack" family, that it teaches the dog the only den it need keep unsoiled is the box in which it is confined. The crate works against housetraining, crate opponents believe, and worse, against socialization with the family.

Crating has long been standard practice for breeders and people who show dogs in competition. It's a practical, efficient practice for keeping multiple dogs, housing them indoors and traveling with them. As the field of dog behavior counseling developed, the crate was, and still is, a tool used to help counter certain behavioral problems. For the greyhound racing industry of course, crating is essential. How else could low budget kennels keep more than a thousand dogs under control and close to the racetrack?



In light of all this, it seems reasonable to suggest a greyhound leaving a structured racing kennel for an alien home environment needs a crate to transition from track life to home life. To the contrary, experience shows this is not true.

## **The Great Crate Debate, Part I**

### **The crate creates and maintains a vicious cycle**

A crated dog doesn't have a chance to learn proper house behaviors and so, a vicious cycle begins: In the crate there is no opportunity to learn. A dog that isn't given the opportunity to learn can't learn and is condemned to make mistakes. A dog that makes mistakes must stay in the crate to "protect" the house and itself. In the crate, there is no opportunity to learn...

Far from being a den, the crate becomes a prison. More sadly, the opportunity for dog and owner to form that unique human-animal bond is lost.

Why then do so many greyhound adoption sources and animal shelters insist that you crate your new dog? The answer is simple: They don't know their dogs well enough to determine which, if any, might need to be crated. The play-it-safe option is easier.

Some make money by selling crates. More importantly, they are able to avoid having to deal with so-called post-adoption behavioral issues, like chewing or destructive behavior.

The way to avoid crate usage and give a dog a quality life while counteracting behavioral issues is to adopt from an agency that gets to know each dog as an individual. Usually this type of agency - and I'm proud to include the Greyhound Adoption Center in this category -- is an advocate for the adopters as much as an advocate for the dogs in its care. Careful screening of potential adopters, education about the needs of each dog as an individual, and meticulous matching of the right character of dog to each home make the crating issue moot and create happy, long-term relationships for both dogs and adopters.

Crating is not the great panacea many people would have you believe. A crate should be a tool to be used only in the short-term, if necessary, and under special circumstances. I tried to come up with at least one example of those special circumstances for this article; I couldn't. Truth is - the reason people crate greyhounds is almost always for convenience.

In my more than 20 years of working with greyhounds and placing well over 4,000 of them, I have never come across the dog or the circumstances that would make using a crate necessary.

*(1/2004)*