

## DENNING

### Why should I den my dog?

Teaching your dog to settle happily in a room is particularly useful when toilet training a puppy or an older dog. Denning also helps prevent destructive or obnoxious behaviours when you can't be present to supervise; provides a secure place to rest when family activity gets too much; provides a safe haven whenever the dog feels the need. A den is a great place to prevent your dog becoming overstimulated during fireworks, thunderstorms, night time native fauna movement (i.e. possums and bats etc).

It is much kinder to set the dog up to learn calm relaxed human appropriate behaviour than to leave a dog to develop his/her own behaviours without your guidance.

### What is a den?

A den is any room you may be able to secure in your house, generally a bathroom or laundry, garage, enclosed veranda are good starting places. Make sure the room is well ventilated, cool in summer and warm in winter; all the cupboards should be secured closed and furniture should be fairly durable. Any items that could potentially be chewed, broken, or knocked over should be removed from the room. Bedding, water, toys and something to chew should be arranged in the room.

Some dogs, even larger breeds prefer small spaces so will elect to lie in the shower cubicle or toilet room.

### Getting started.

Before practicing this exercise, make sure your dog has had a chance to toilet.

- Start by sprinkling a few high value treats on the floor.
- Dog should be allowed to enter and leave room willingly.
- Place a raw hide chew in the room to encourage the dog to go in and stay in for a few moments. Do not be tempted to shut the door yet!
- Spend a few minutes in the room teaching him how to play with the toys available to him (ask for a "Silly Game" Handout)
- Only when the dog is very comfortable being in the room, shut the door for **1 second** while the dog is occupied with a chew or toy.
- Release your dog while he/she is calm and quiet,
- Increase the time with the door shut by **2-3 seconds** at a time.
- If this process is done too quickly the dog will not learn to love the den and will not see it as a restful retreat.
- Feed your dog meals in the den to increase his love of the den.
- If your dog starts to vocalize or scratch you have extended the time too quickly, back up a few steps and try again.

The process may take several days or even weeks or as little as just a few days depending on your dog's temperament. It is important only to proceed to the next step when your dog is comfortable with the present situation.

***IMPORTANT: When you release your dog take it to eliminate, and have a pat or gentle interaction with him/her.***

Somewhere along this journey your dog will learn to love and respect their den, your dog will begin to look for their den in many situations and often regard it as their chill out zone.

A den is not the ultimate solution for every behavioural problem. If your dog becomes distressed or anxious at any stage, seek personal advice from the Animal Training and Behaviour Centre.

A den should NEVER, NEVER be used as a punishment as it is supposed to be a calm and relaxed place.

**Do not leave your dog in the den for longer than his/her bladder can cope. (Puppies 1 hour for every month of age, i.e. 2 months old = 2 hours maximum).**

### **Problem Solving**

**My dog won't enter the den:**

Are your rewards rewarding enough for the dog?

Keep each training session short and fun!

Always finish before either of you start losing interest or get frustrated. (Don't say - "just one more time!")

**My dog liked it before but won't go in it now!**

For whatever reason your dog used to love their den and won't even look at it now doesn't really matter because we will never know for sure!

Do go back to step one and retrain but take it very slowly making every step more exciting than it was before.