



## RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

# Settling puppies at night

For a puppy, leaving the security of familiar surroundings and their littermates can be very overwhelming. There are many new sights, sounds and smells in the new environment. It is no wonder that they complain when left alone for the first time in their short lives!

The following information sheet is to give you some tips on how to help you to settle your new puppy at night and also answers some common questions.

### Sleeping area

Inside or outside? Dogs are very social animals and like to be with their human companions. For this reason we do encourage you to have an inside sleeping area for your new puppy. Not only is inside closer to you, safe and warm, but having your puppy inside at night (and during other times too) can help to prevent problem behaviours developing such as barking, escaping and chasing wildlife.

### Restricting the sleeping area

The next step is to restrict the area that the puppy is sleeping in. This can help to keep the puppy safe, prevent toileting in inappropriate areas of the house and chewing of inappropriate items such as furniture.

A den can be set up in a laundry or similar area with all the pup's needs such as a bed, blankets, toys, chews and water. See our Denning information sheet. Alternatively you can use baby gates or baby play pens to restrict access to certain rooms or areas.



### Creates are GREAT!

We highly recommend crate training your new puppy. Not only is this helping to restrict the puppy's area at night, but also helps with toilet training. You can set up a crate in or close to your bedroom and then the crate can be moved to other areas of the house when the puppy is older. Refer to our Crating for management info sheet on how to set your puppy up for success with a crate.

Crating has many other benefits for you and your puppy, and for when your puppy is an adult dog. These benefits include helping to prevent problem behaviours such as chasing wildlife, and being able to take your dog on holidays with you.

Refer to our Benefits of a Crate Trained Dog info sheet.

### What to include in the sleeping area?

A soft toy or blanket with the puppy's mum or littermates smell on it

A soft/padded bed and blankets

A warm water bottle wrapped in a blanket can help in winter too



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Access to a toilet area (such as newspaper) for dens

Include two sources of water (in case one is tipped over!)

Items that the puppy can play with (and rip up!) can help, such as an empty bottle with some treats in it, some toys which you can put small amounts of food in such as kongs, long lasting chews such as pigs ears or sheeps ears and/or toys which you can smear with small amount of peanut butter or honey. The main meal should have been fed well before settling down (see Feeding and Toileting below).

### **Dog Appeasing Pheromone (DAP)**

This product can be purchased from your vet and is designed to mimic the pheromone lactating female dogs emit when feeding puppies. This can give the puppies a sense of calm and wellbeing and tends to work well with helping puppies settle into their new home.

### **Feeding and toileting**

Young puppies cannot hold their bladder all night long! You will need to get up in the middle of the night to take your puppy outside. Ensure they have had a chance to toilet as late as possible before you settle them into their area at night. Set your alarm during the night several times depending on how young your puppy is. Expect to have a young puppy up to 12 weeks of age needing to toilet every 2 hours! This can greatly depend on the breed and the individual.

Ensure your puppy is fed prior to settling down at night, at least 2 hours or so. We don't encourage free feeding so don't leave food out for the puppy except chews and food in filled toys.

### **Entertaining and exercising**

Having lots of toys, physical and mental activities can help to tire your puppy out before settling at night. For safe exercise recommendations for puppies, refer to the Safe Puppy Activities info sheet.

Teach your puppy how to get their food out of kongs, toys and treat balls, use scatter feeding or hiding spots for food. Refer to Entertaining your dog and Kong info sheets. If you use these methods for giving food, this will keep your puppy mentally stimulated and help to tire them out more quickly!

Allow for a certain amount of destruction! Use toilet rolls, cardboard boxes, tissues or whatever helps to keep your puppy entertained. Incorporate some food such as smearing small amounts of honey or peanut butter on the inside of cardboard boxes to get your puppy interested. Make sure you supervise when you use these items first to check they are safe for your puppy.

### **To get up or not get up?**

Puppies will cry! They miss the familiarity of their litter mates and environment and will be calling out to find them. If you have set your puppy up well, hopefully the vocalisation will be minimal. But...chances are your first few nights with your new puppy will be fairly disrupted! This is normal; however, please make sure you don't reinforce your puppy's crying! We can very easily reinforce this by going to them when they cry and cuddling them or letting them out and into our beds! This can make the crying even more intense, as the next time they are put into their den or room, all they have learnt is "when I cry or make a loud noise, they will come to me!"

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Set your puppy up for success (refer back to sleeping areas, toileting, entertainment and exercise), and ensure you wait out the vocalisation. Reward your puppy when they are quiet! It is far better to set your alarm and let your puppy out when they are quiet, than being woken up with crying or howling!

Finally, enjoy your new puppy. Be patient and kind, persevere and maintain a sense of humour.

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