

Crates Aren't Cool ...

But They Save Your Dogs' Lives

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by Gwen Van der Zyppe

In December 2021, we purchased a very safe crash-tested set of crates that are permanently attached to the tie-downs in the car. The crates were not cheap. They are not particularly easy for the dogs to see their surroundings nor can the dogs stick their heads out of the windows. Many times, I felt that we shouldn't have bought them. And I felt guilty that the dogs were in these somewhat small crates.

I readily admit that seeing my dogs hang their heads out a partially open car window used to make me smile. Knowing that they were happy and enjoying life used to make any risk worthwhile. But that all changed one beautiful Saturday afternoon in June 2022.

My husband and I, along with Molly and her daughter, Margot, had a long but fabulous day training with Rock Tavern



NAVHDA. Margot did her first unofficial duck drag (and even though it was her first time smelling a duck, she did well.) Molly made improvements in her retrieve. Good friends, old and new, had enjoyed training together. The weather was perfect. We had a slice of pizza and got on the road for a one-hour trip home around 4 p.m.

In the blink of an eye, my husband dozed off at the wheel, crossed over oncoming traffic into a field of tall grasses, hit a huge tree and then a car-sized boulder before we came to a stop. The air bags deployed and did their jobs. He and I were able to get out of the car quickly as the engine was smoldering and we didn't know what would happen.

Our first thoughts were of Molly and Margot. How were they? Did they get injured? Or worse?

We opened the hatchback to reveal their safety crates (which were mostly intact) and saw their sweet, slightly confused faces looking at us. Margot, ever the puppy, jumped out of the crate wanting to play. Molly, a much more empathetic soul, felt our stress and fear and was more subdued. But both dogs were walking and seemed okay.

If we'd not permanently installed the crash-tested crates in the car, the results could have been very different. Dogs can become projectiles during an accident and travel through the passenger cabin with nothing to stop them.

After posting about our accident on Facebook, one woman told me that her friend had been hit in the head by her German Shepard during a crash and that woman is now paralyzed from the neck down. She was only 28-years old. Another post mentioned that scared and injured dogs were roaming the streets in the moments after an accident.

We could not have lived with ourselves if anything had happened to the girls in this accident.

Please think about car and truck safety for those that you love, especially the four-legged ones. 🐾

