



Boarding Your Pet

Preparing for a vacation can be a stressful time, and if you can't take your pet with you, it's just one more thing to worry about. Finding a place for your pet to stay is an important step in preparing for your vacation and if you aren't able to find a pet sitter or family member to watch your pet, you want to find the second best thing. Many boarding facilities have different rules and daily activities, so before booking a stay for your family pet consider the following helpful tips:

Ask around. Asking friends or family is one way to find a great boarding facility. Friends and family can give you their honest opinion on how their experience was. Also, your local veterinarian might have a few suggestions for you too.

Visit in person. It's important to go to each boarding location and visit them in person so you can see for yourself where your pet might be staying. Introduce yourself to staff to see how friendly and knowledgeable they are about dogs and cats. Also, be sure to seek out staff members who might specifically work with your pet. Find out if someone will be on the premises at all times and if there's a veterinarian on call 24/7. Not only is it important that the staff is friendly and knowledgeable, but it's also important that the facility is clean, has appropriate enclosures for the size of your pet, and that your pet will have protected access to the outdoors.

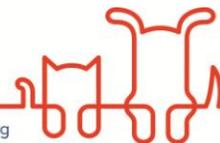
Know the rules. Most boarding facilities will insist that your pet be up-to-date on all vaccinations. Be sure to bring a copy of your pet's health record with you when touring the different boarding facilities. If you find a facility you like, you can register right then instead of having to go back with the medical records.

Tour the entire facility. This includes the outdoor areas. Make sure there is a fence enclosing the yard so that your pet won't accidentally escape. Also you want to be sure dog waste is picked up at the facility. You don't want your pet staying somewhere that isn't well taken care of.

Special kitty needs. Your cat might not enjoy the loudness of barking dogs, so be sure to check out the area they have designated for your pet. A lot of boarding rooms have a separate soundproof area just for cats to provide a less stressful stay. Also, be sure to see if they have a "cat room" where your pet can roam around and stretch a few hours a day. Make sure all litter boxes are properly tended to.

Room assignments. If you have two dogs that are bonded together, ask to see if they can be in the same room. If you are just boarding one dog, make sure that they won't be sticking another dog in the same room as yours. Your pet doesn't want to have to stay with a stranger.

Daily agenda. Ask the boarding facility for a copy of what your dog or cat's typical day would be like there. How often will he/she be fed? How many hours will he/she be free to play? How often does your dog get taken on walks? Is there supervised time with other pets staying at the same location? Is there a trainer on staff who might teach your dog a few things while you are away? How often do they spend one-on-one time with your pet? And, do they have webcams in place so you can watch your pet from afar on your computer? A lot of facilities do have webcam access for your piece of mind.



Hours of business. Make sure to know the hours of operation for the facility you chose. You don't want to be on your way to the airport in the morning and see that they aren't quite open yet. Prepare in advance to know when they open and when they close.

Special instructions. If your pet has any special dietary needs or health needs, make sure to ask the facility if they allow you to bring in special food or if they are willing to administer medicine your pet might need. It might be a good idea to ask if you can bring your own food even if your pet doesn't require a special meal, just so they don't have to switch up their routine diet.

Grooming. Before picking up your dog, ask if they can groom or bathe your dog. Dogs especially might get a lot of different smells on them and it's always nice to come home with a clean pooch.

Trial run. If you have concerns about how your pet might do in a boarding facility, let them have a trial run for a night. If your dog comes back stressed, dirty or upset, you'll know to look for another facility.

Book early. Boarding facilities can fill up fast – especially the good ones. Be prepared that during the holidays you will need to book your pet's stay way in advance.

Don't forget your pet's identification. Be sure your pet has a collar and identification tags with their name on it along with your name and phone number. It might also be a good idea to get your pet microchipped before being boarded. Often times identification tags or collars can fall off your pet and become lost. Microchips are a safe and easier way to find your pet if they get lost or misplaced while you are on vacation.

