



Choosing a Boarding Kennel

If you are heading out on a vacation, you'll need to decide if you want to take your pet along or place them in a boarding situation. You could ask friends or family to look after your pet, but do they have the time? Will they care for them the way you want? If you feel unsure, you may want to look into a professional boarding kennel. Here are some tips to select the best one for you and your furry friend.

How to find a good kennel

- Get a recommendation from friends, neighbors, a veterinarian, or your dog trainer.
- Find out whether your state requires boarding kennel inspections. Check them out with the Better Business Bureau and look online for recommendations.
- Confirm that the kennel can accommodate your pet's special needs (if any).
- Schedule a visit.

What to look for

On your visit, ask to see all the places your pet may be taken. Pay particular attention to the following:

- Does the facility look and smell clean?
- Is there sufficient ventilation and light?
- Is a comfortable temperature maintained?
- Does the staff seem knowledgeable and caring?
- Are pets required to be current on their vaccinations, including the vaccine for canine kennel cough (Bordetella). Such a requirement helps protect your animal and others.
- Does each dog have his own adequately sized indoor-outdoor run or an indoor run and a schedule for exercise?
- Are outdoor runs and exercise areas protected from wind, rain, and snow?

- Are resting boards and bedding provided to allow dogs to rest off the concrete floor?
- Are cats housed away from dogs?
- Is there enough space for cats to move around comfortably?
- Is there enough space between the litter box and food bowls?
- How often are pets fed?
- Can the owner bring a pet's special food?
- What veterinary services are available?
- Are other services available such as grooming, training, bathing?
- How are rates calculated?

How to prepare your pet

Be sure your pet is well socialized around other people and pets; if your pet has an aggression problem or is otherwise unruly, she may not be a good candidate for boarding. It's also a good idea to accustom your pet to longer kennel stays by first boarding her during a short trip, such as a weekend excursion. This allows you to work out any problems before boarding your pet for an extended period.

- Make sure she is current on vaccinations.
- Double-check that you have your pet's medications and special food (if any).
- Give the kennel your veterinarian's phone number and contact information for you and a local backup.
- When you arrive with your pet at the boarding facility, remind the staff about any medical or behavior problems.
- Hand your pet to a staff member, say good-bye, and leave.