

Finding the Right Boarding Kennel for Your Pet

As so many of us regard our pets as beloved family members, we look forward to spending our holiday time with them. We enjoy including them in our vacation plans. We may take road trips with them or travel with them via plane (although it may be complicated or disappointing to undertake travel by plane, train or bus with our animal companions.) Actually, Greyhound and other bus and railroad companies for the most part, do not even permit pets on board.

As I have twenty-one dogs, it is a Herculean task for my husband and me to leave home for any period of time. We may take brief business or other obligatory trips throughout the year. However, at least once a year, we recognize the need to get away from our personal and professional responsibilities and flee to a place far away from friends, family and colleagues.

We are extremely fortunate to have found a husband and wife pet sitting team who live in our home while we are away. They not only take excellent care of our dogs but also manage and maintain our house and property. They bring our mail and newspapers inside; monitor the sprinkler system; water our indoor and outdoor plants and, of course, most importantly provide our dogs with TLC. They feed, exercise and play with them. They even brush and bathe them. If they require any veterinary care while we are gone, our pet sitters take them to our vet or have one of our vets make a house call. They are a godsend and I don't know what I would do without them. And yet, even with the confidence I have in them, I know that anything can happen, and I definitely suffer from separation anxiety – probably more so than my dogs!

Before we had twenty-one dogs and before we found our house sitters, we boarded our dogs at a boarding kennel. This can be an excellent option for someone who has only one or two pets and needs or would like to travel, but does not need the extensive home care or attention our many dogs require. My husband and I still periodically rely on an excellent boarding facility to care for some of our special needs dogs while we're away.

Here are some tips to help you find the perfect boarding kennel for your pet:

- 1). Get referrals from your vet, friends and neighbors
- 2). Search for and research local boarding facilities on the Internet
- 3). Visit the kennels that rank the highest in recommendations from clients and ask for references/reviews from clients. Does the facility belong to the AKBA (American Kennel Boarding Association)? Make sure the kennel is immaculate and well-organized and that it requires each pet staying there to have proof of veterinarian recommended immunizations, rabies vaccines, bordatella, etc.

- 4). When visiting the kennel, make sure it is clean, sanitary, free of offensive odors, and that the animals look well-cared for and healthy – look and listen for signs of skin irritations, coughing, sneezing or wheezing, eyes oozing, etc. that would cause potential danger or illness for your pet
- 5). Make sure the facility is climate controlled (air-conditioned in summer; heated in winter) and has adequate ventilation
- 6). Make certain your pet has an indoor/outdoor kennel enabling him to go in and out as he chooses.
- 7). Make sure you're pet will receive plenty of exercise every day- find out how frequently he is walked and played with each day
- 8). Find out how often your pet will be fed and given fresh water each day
- 9). Determine the kind of food and treats you want your pet to consume daily (they should be high quality and consistent or the same as they receive at home). Find out if you can bring your pet's food
- 10). If your pet is older or has special needs, make certain that his needs will be met and that medications will be administered regularly
- 11). Find out the credentials and experience of staff members as well as facility owners – who will actually be taking care of your pet, walking and exercising her, etc? Make a point of meeting the people that will actually be taking care of your pet
- 12). Is there a 24-hour emergency animal hospital nearby? Are employees trained to recognize and deal with potential health issues or emergencies?
- 13). Is the boarding facility monitored by nearby fire and police stations? Is the building alarmed directly to a local fire station?
- 14). Is the facility secure – are there adequate kennel locks and secure fencing so that your pet cannot escape?
- 15). Make sure that you provide the kennel with specific written instructions regarding medications and special needs. Also leave important/crucial contact information with the owner and staff, i.e. your cell phone # and home phone as well as your destination and it's phone number, your vet's name & number, the names and numbers of close friends, family members and neighbors who can respond to your pet's needs in case of an emergency or crisis.

If you are planning on boarding your pet during the summer or during holidays, make reservations long in advance. Make certain your pet is current on all vaccines and is healthy and has written proof of his health status and medical history before you attempt

to board him. Finding an excellent boarding kennel for your pet can provide your pet with quality care and fun and you with peace of mind.