

Choosing a Boarding Kennel

BOARDING FACILITIES

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Since not all boarding kennels are the same, it's important to do some research when looking for one for your pet. Finding the right facility to match your pets' needs is the key to a successful stay for your pet, and peace of mind for you.

BOARDING PROS AND CONS

If you board your pet, the pros are:

- Less stress from traveling long distances.
- A welcoming environment with love and attention.
- Monitoring by staff trained in spotting any potential health issues
- A secure environment to help prevent escapes.

However, there are also several drawbacks to using a boarding kennel. For instance, your pet may experience:

- increased exposure to potentially ill animals
- stress related to being in an unfamiliar environment
- lack of boarding options if your pet is something other than a dog or cat

Knowing what is best for your pet will help you decide if a boarding facility is a good choice, and which one to choose.

FINDING A GOOD BOARDING KENNEL

Start your search by talking to your friends, neighbors, veterinarian or anyone else you trust that has pets. You can also look in the Yellow Pages under "Kennels & Pet Boarding." Once you get a decent roster of possible kennels, start doing research on each one.

Ask the boarding kennels you call if they belong to the American Boarding Kennels Association (ABKA) (1-877-570-7788, <http://www.abka.com>). The ABKA promotes professional standards of pet care among boarding kennels, and require members to subscribe to a code of ethics. ABKA also offers accreditation to any facility that would like to participate. The accreditation indicates that the facility has been inspected and meets ABKA standards of professionalism, safety and quality of care.

Another good source to check is the Better Business Bureau (<http://bbb.org/>). You can see if any complaints have been made against the kennel you are considering. Additionally, you can find out if those complaints have been handled by the company in a timely manner.

Once you've narrowed your search down to a few facilities, confirm with each one that they can provide the type of care your pet requires. Questions to ask are:

- Can they handle the special needs of your pet?
- Are the kennels able to medicate sick pets should they come down with an illness while in their care?

- Do they provide emergency care if it becomes necessary?
- Does the kennel have space to board your pet through the duration of your travels?

The next step is to visit each boarding facility that seems like a good fit.

Here are things to look for:

- Is the facility clean (both looks and smells)?
- Is there enough ventilation and light?
- Is the staff knowledgeable and caring?
- Is the indoor temperature comfortable?
- Are all pets required to be current on vaccines?
- Does each pet have adequate space to move around?
- Are outdoor exercise areas protected from snow, wind and rain?
- Are cats housed in separate areas from the dogs?
- Do dogs have bedding that allows them to rest off concrete flooring?
- Is there enough space between eating and elimination areas?
- How often are pets fed?
- Can owners bring their pet's special food?
- Are veterinarian services available?
- What are the rates? How are rates calculated?
- What other types of services do they provide (grooming, bathing, etc.)?

PREPARING YOUR PET

Make sure your pets know basic commands and are well socialized. If your pet has any aggression problems or is unruly, your pet may not be a good candidate for boarding. Additionally, be sure your pet is current on all vaccinations.

Try to get your pet accustomed to boarding by starting off small. Try boarding your pet over a weekend. If any difficulties or problems should arise within this time, you will have time to work them out prior to longer boarding stays.

Make sure you take your veterinarian's contact information, your contact information and a back-up's contact information with you to the boarding kennel. Remind the staff there about any special issues your pet may have, such as medications, special foods, or any behavioral problems your pet may have (like fear of other animals, etc.).

And last, but not least, have a great trip!



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