

Boarding Your Pet

Successful Boarding

The goals of kennel owner are happy, healthy pets, and satisfied pet owners. This requires a cooperative effort from kennel owner and pet owner. Responding to numerous requests from pet owners, listed below are the features you should look for in selecting your kennel, and suggests what you can do to ensure that your pet receives the best care possible. Let's start at the beginning...

Finding Your Local Kennels

There are several ways of locating the kennels that are convenient to you:

Recommendations of friends: Satisfied customers are the best recommendation that a kennel can receive. Ask your friends and neighbors about their experiences.

Veterinary References: Ask your pet's health care professional. Your veterinarian may have first hand knowledge of facilities in your area. Many kennels have an open door policy with Veterinarians and value the relationship. Many veterinarians *know* which facilities are good and which are not. They may not feel comfortable sharing 'horror stories' but will feel comfortable recommending a facility they hear good things about.

GOOGLE! Do a Google search on the Internet. Many kennels have web sites. The more information available at your fingertips the better! Make a list of the places you want to tour. Call them for tour hours and make an appointment.

Phone Directory: Yellow page advertising is a thing of the past. Not all kennels advertise in large directories. Remember though, if you find one in the directory, the size of the ad is no indication of the facility's quality

Evaluating a Kennel

After finding your local kennels, you can determine the one to use by:

1. Telephoning the kennel: Call to see if the kennel can accommodate your pet. During peak times such as the Christmas season and summer vacations, many kennels are booked up and cannot accept your pet. Also, because some pets require special handling or accommodations (very young puppies, animals on special medication or feeding schedules, or giant breeds, for example), all kennels may not accept them. While you are on the phone, make an appointment to visit the kennel.

2. Making a personal visit to the kennel: A personal visit is essential to determine whether or not the kennel will be satisfactory. During your visit, observe or ask about the following:

General appearance of the kennel:

Following regular daily clean-up procedures, the kennel should look (and smell) neat and clean. Kennel operators are proud of their kennels and like to show them off, but some of them do not permit visitors in areas where animals are housed. There are two key reasons for establishing a "No Visitors" policy. One is that some animals react fearfully or aggressively toward strangers. As a result, the presence of strangers in the kennel can cause such dogs to injure themselves or develop intestinal problems. Second, visitors do not follow the same stringent disinfecting procedures used by kennel personnel, and can transport contagious agents (bacteria, viruses) into the kennel. However, kennels with a "No Visitors" policy should provide you some type of viewing window, so that you can see where your pet will be staying. In visiting your local kennels, you will observe that there are several types of kennel designs currently in use. Some kennels have indoor/outdoor runs; some have totally enclosed facilities; and some house pets inside but utilize outside exercise areas. Each of these designs has its own advantages, and you should ask the kennel operator to explain the advantages of the system in use at that kennel.

Security: When you are on a trip, your pet may decide to try to "find" you. Because of this tendency, and because very few homes are designed with pet security in mind, pets can escape from inexperienced individuals

who might be asked to watch your pet. Boarding kennels, on the other hand, are designed to prevent this kind of accident. During your kennel visit, look for sturdy gates, well-maintained fencing, and dividers between runs. If your dog is a climber, digger or some other type of "escape artist," tell the kennel operator so that extra precautions can be taken (wire covered runs, locks on gates, etc.). Cats always require covered facilities.

Safety: Kennels areas where your pet will stay should be free of sharp objects, harmful chemicals and objects your pet might swallow. Primary enclosures (sleeping quarters) should provide solid dividers between your pet and the other boarders, both for reasons of safety and so that your pet will be able to relax and sleep without feeling challenged by his or her neighbors. Exercise areas should include barriers between runs high enough to prevent male dogs from urinating into adjacent runs. Surfaces should offer good traction even when wet. Firefighting equipment should be readily available.

Supervision: Proper supervision is the key to good boarding. Pets should be checked frequently during the day by someone who is trained to recognize the signs of illness and distress. Experience and practical knowledge are required to detect or interpret such symptoms as lethargy ("I thought he was just sleeping"), severe intestinal disorders (friends or acquaintances rarely check the backyard for bloody stool), urinary problems (it is almost impossible to detect blood in urine when pets urinate on grass), loss of appetite, coughing, sneezing, or discharges from the eyes or nose. Yet, all of these signs can be significant. Competent kennel personnel are trained to

recognize and evaluate such signs and to seek veterinary assistance when needed. Therefore, you should try to evaluate the competence of the kennel personnel.

Sanitation: The kennel should be free of dirt, fecal accumulation, odors and parasite infestation (flies, fleas, ticks). There should be a strict schedule of disinfecting with effective chemicals.

Health Care: Inquire about the following:

Water... Individual water bowls should be provided for each animal.

Food... Check on the kennel's feeding procedures and mention any special diets/procedures that your pat may need.

Veterinary Services... How does the kennel obtain veterinary help when needed?

Immunization Requirements... Dogs and cats should be properly immunized prior to being boarded; what is the kennel's protocol regarding the immunization of pets prior to boarding?

Medication Administration... If your pet requires medication, will the kennel cooperate and document medication administered?

Parasite Control... What are the kennel's policies regarding flea and tick control and will your pet be safe from these parasites while boarded?