



Traveling: You or Your Dog

When you travel there are several options for handling your dog. You may decide to take your dog with you. You may decide to leave your dog in a boarding kennel or you may hire a pet sitter to come to your home and care for your dog. Whichever you do, keep in mind these general tips:

- * If you are planning a trip with your dog by car or plane, first check with your veterinarian to ensure that your dog is fit for travel. You should avoid traveling with puppies, elderly, ill or high-strung dogs. You will be required to have a current veterinary certificate if traveling out of state with your dog.
- * Be sure that your dog is clearly identified by name with a collar and tag.
- * Make sure that everyone is clear about the services to be provided by putting each dog's needs and scheduling in writing.
- * If you are relying on a neighborhood child to look after your dog, make sure that the child is mature enough to be reliable or that an adult will supervise the care provided.
- * Make sure that you have enough food, medicine and other supplies on hand to last a few days beyond your scheduled return date.
- * Keep all of your dog's vaccinations up-to-date. Inform your veterinarian that you will be away and arrange to guarantee payment if emergencies should arise.
- * If your dog will be staying at home with "drop-in" care, be sure you pet-proof the house and yard. Make sure plants are out of reach, doors and windows secure and household chemicals and other hazards removed. Be sure that heating and cooling systems are set to levels that will be comfortable for your dog.
- * Introduce your dog to the kennel or the pet sitter in advance of your being gone.
- * If your pet is leaving home, provide familiar items such as toys, blankets and even an old sweater or other article of clothing carrying your scent.
- * Expect the unexpected. Even with the best planning, dogs are likely to do something you didn't anticipate. Minor behavior problems such as digging or chewing may surface. Things should quickly return to normal upon your return.
- * If you are traveling with your dog by car, check in advance with motels and hotels to see if pets are allowed. It is a good idea to travel with a crate and put your dog in it whenever you must leave him or her in the room alone.
- * Never leave a dog alone in a car on a warm day. During a 30-minute period on a 74-degree day the temperature in a car can rise to 120 degrees, even with the windows open. The result can be heatstroke or even death.
- * If flying your dog, use direct flights instead of connecting one. Most problems occur when you are not on the same flight as your dog and during baggage shuffles between connecting flights. Ensure that you have identification on the crate.
- * Owners of short-faced dogs should know that transporting these dogs by airplane can put them at risk because they are unable to handle the rapid breathing caused by travel-induced stress due to the design of their nose and throat. Dogs at particular risk are Bulldogs, Pugs, Boston Terriers, and Pekingese.
- * If traveling with your dog by car, take along feeding dishes, your pet's regular food and water or ice cubes. Be prepared to give your dog frequent rest and exercise stops, but keep your animal on a leash when out of the car.

* If you are taking your dog camping or hiking, be sure to bring along your actual written proof of rabies vaccination. Ensure that you bring your leash and a long tie-out. Remember that leash laws are strictly enforced in parks. Make arrangements for your dog to sleep in a crate, a tent, or a motor vehicle in order to avoid contact with wildlife. Be prepared to clean up after your dog and include a dog first aid kit in your camping gear.

What to consider in choosing a boarding kennel:

* Get referrals from friends or your veterinarian and be prepared to inspect several places before choosing one.

* The kennel should look and smell clean. Food and water should be fresh and the animals should look as though they receive regular grooming and attention. If a kennel won't let you tour the facilities, don't even consider leaving your dog there.

* Examine the kennel's physical set-up. Individual kennels should be roomy enough for the size of your pet and the cages should be well-made and secure. There should be provisions for exercise and a warm, dry sleeping surface. Ask about heating, cooling and ventilation systems. Your pet should be comfortable regardless of the temperature outside.

* Ask about the requirements for accepting pets. Current vaccinations should be required for all animals. Ask about emergency provisions and whether a veterinarian is on staff or on call. Talk to the attendants. If they don't seem to care about the animals, your pet won't do well.

* Find out about requesting special diets or medications and if there are charges for such "extras", your pet needs more than just a place to stay and a roof over his or her head.