How to Choose a Boarding Facility for Your Cat

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Many times people will go on a vacation, a business trip, or have a family emergency and need to find someone to care for their pet(s). It is not always as easy as just taking the pet to a family member's home or having a neighbor drop in. There are several other possibilities when you need someone to care for your cat including:

Veterinary clinics

Some veterinary clinics will board clients' cats. This may be an ideal situation, especially if your cat has a certain medical condition, such as diabetes, that requires medication. You may wish to ask some of the same questions as listed below under 'Boarding kennels.'

Pet sitters

In some areas, cat sitters are available. They are people that either stay at your house while you are gone or stop in during the day to care for your cat. Have the prospective sitter come to your home for an interview, and consider:

- How do they relate to the pet(s)?
- If they cannot stay at the house, how frequently can they come (1-3 times a day or more depending upon the health status of your cat), and when?
- Will they perform other household tasks such as taking in the mail and paper?
- Are they willing, and do they know how, to give medications?
- Will they be able to perform the necessary tasks such as cleaning the litter box, etc?
- How much experience do they have, and do they have references?
- Are they acquainted with the veterinarians and the emergency clinic(s) in the area?
- How do they answer questions you may pose such as, What would you do if the cat vomits frequently or strains while in the litter box?

Boarding kennels

Boarding kennels may be at someone's home or at a separate business location. Make an appointment and have a tour of the facility and talk with the staff. Find out:

- What are the sizes of the kennels or runs? Do they have solid partitions between them? Are there both indoor and outdoor facilities?
- Are the cages clean and free from excrement? Does the kennel area smell?
- How often are the cages, dishes, (and litter boxes) cleaned, and with what? How are the cages cleaned between boarders?
- Will they bathe your cat if he becomes soiled with urine or excrement?
- What is the regular feeding schedule, and can it be adapted if your cat has special needs? Can you bring the cat's regular food?
- Who actually works with the animals?
- What are their admit and pick up hours? What if your return is delayed?
- Which vaccinations are required, and which are recommended? Are vaccinations that you administered acceptable or do they need to be given by a veterinarian?
- Do they require testing for certain diseases such as feline leukemia (FeLV)? Are there solid partitions between the cats, and are the cages far enough away from each other to avoid close contact between cats?
- Is there a veterinarian or emergency clinic nearby?
- Is there a time you can call to check on how your cat is doing?
- What are their security provisions? Do the cages have good latches?
- Is the facility accredited by the American Boarding Kennels Association?
- Are there separate boarding areas for cats?

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Some upper scale kennels, for additional costs, provide couches, televisions, extra playtime, and even windows for cats.

Conclusion

As with finding other providers, ask your veterinarian, family, and friends for their recommendations when choosing a boarding facility. Regardless of the boarding facility/sitter you decide on, make reservations far in advance, if possible. Many facilities are fully booked four to six months in advance for times such as Christmas or spring break. If you are taking your cat away from home for boarding, ask if you can bring a cat bed, toys, or your sweatshirt to put in with the pet. This may make the time away from home less stressful for your cat. Knowing your pet is in good hands and being well-cared for will make your trip less stressful for you.

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