

Vacation Care for Your Pet

Vacation pet care is very important and something you need to think about well in advance of booking your holiday. Vacation care can be in the form of a 'live-in' pet sitter, a caregiver that visits once or twice a day or a temporary stay at a boarding kennel. When making the decision about what type of pet care is best, it is important to take into account your pet's personality and needs (both medical and emotional) as well as your comfort level.

For reliable references, talk to friends who regularly use a sitter or staff at your cat's veterinary clinic. Next, you'll want to interview potential pet sitters and/or have them come to your home to meet the animals prior to a vacation. This will give you an opportunity to see how they interact with your pet(s) and how the pet(s) reacts to them. If you are using a boarding kennel, visit the kennel prior to your holiday to make sure you are comfortable with the facility.

If you have cats, it is a good idea to use an experienced cat sitter. Some pet sitters specialize in cats or have years of cat experience. Although you may have friends or family who offer to cat sit, many lost cat calls to MEOW each year are from well-intentioned but inexperienced cat sitters. So while using friends or family may be more economical, they are often not as experienced at caring for cats, observing signs of illness and so forth.

Below please find some additional tips to get the most out of vacation care for your pets:

- Popular vacation times such as Christmas and Easter are very busy. Book ahead to ensure you get your preferred cat sitter.
- Make sure your cat sitter has a list of the following:
 - Veterinary clinic name, vet name and phone number;
 - Your contact information while on vacation and specific dates;
 - The contact for someone with a spare key to your house and/or the code to your alarm;
 - A list of your pets' medications, dosages and location of extra medication;
 - An emergency contact should you be unavailable;
 - Emergency contacts for household repair people such as plumbers and electricians;
 - A pre-authorized form for treatment should your cat need immediate or emergency care in your absence. (Optional but recommended)

Of course, you'll want to have lots of your pet's food and litter available, as well as detailed instructions for your pet sitter on timing and quantity.