

## VACATION CONSIDERATIONS

Vacations are important to our overall health, and we need them to recharge and relax. Although more and more hotels and resorts are addressing the needs of families with pets, taking a four-legged friend on vacation with us is not always an option. Traveling with your pet on an airline is becoming more difficult. Many carriers have major restrictions, and they no longer allow pets to be tranquilized.

When I went to visit my mother in Poland, I was lucky to have family members to care for my dog. However, not everyone can arrange for family or friends to take care of our pets while we are away. Your pet can be well cared for and may even have a good time while you are gone if you do your homework properly.

First, make sure that your pet is current on its vaccinations prior to boarding anywhere, even if it's a friend's home. We recommend checking with your vet to see if your pet needs to be updated before you leave. Even healthy dogs are vectors of viral diseases. When placed in a new environment, your dog may develop an illness. The most common sickness dogs and cats can contract is infectious tracheobronchitis, or "kennel cough." This ailment is a combination of virus and bacteria and is similar to our cold. Most often it is not a major problem, but pneumonia may be a serious complication of the ailment. A simple intranasal or subcutaneous vaccination will help your pet avoid tracheobronchitis while being boarded.

Second, if your pet is on any type of medication, make sure you take it with you to the boarding facility. In fact, you should provide more than the amount you think will be required just in case your planned return is delayed.

Third, it may sound obvious, but you need to personally tour the facility you are considering. In addition to cleanliness, size should be a factor. Too many kennels crowded together increases the possibility of spreading disease among pets. Be sure there is adequate ventilation, comfortable temperatures, and room to exercise. Ask about when your pet will be fed, when its kennel will be cleaned, and standards for overall care. It's also a good idea to introduce yourself and your pet ahead of time to the person in

charge. Many vet practices provide boarding. This might be a good option, especially if the vet is the one who usually cares for your animal.

Fourth, consider hiring a reliable pet sitter, who will care for your pet in your home. This is often the best choice for cats. Dogs, however, may become bored quickly and either destroy or get depressed in a silent house. They are better off with new smells and new companions to keep them amused and busy while you are away.

Lastly, be sure your vet and the kennel have instructions about what they can do if your pet becomes ill while you are gone. Decide what kind of authority you will bestow on them to make medical decisions if you cannot be contacted.

By doing your homework ahead of time, you can enjoy your time away knowing that your furry family members are in good hands.

