

Kenneling Your Cat

- Even being in the best kennel is stressful for many cats. If your cat does not tolerate boarding well, consider using a pet sitter or arranging for your cat to stay in a room at a friend's or relative's house while you are traveling.
- Before kenneling your cat anywhere, be sure to visit the facilities to see whether they appear comfortable, clean, and well staffed.
- If your cat has special needs, such as a special diet or medication, ask whether the staff can accommodate these needs.
- Cats that will be kenneled must be free of contagious diseases. The kennel may require a health certificate from your veterinarian and proof of your cat's most recent vaccinations.
- When kenneling your cat, provide emergency contact information and take a hiding place for your cat and your cat's food, litter, medication, favorite toy, and bed.

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Even being in the best kennel is stressful for many cats. If your cat does not tolerate boarding well, consider using a pet sitter or arranging for your cat to stay in a room at a friend's or relative's house while you are traveling. If kenneling your cat is your only option, the following guidelines can help improve your cat's stay at a kennel.

Ask Your Veterinarian

If you need to kennel your cat, your veterinarian may have a kennel or may be able to recommend one. The advantage to kenneling your cat at your veterinarian's practice is that if your cat becomes ill, his or her regular veterinarian and health records are on site.

Some kennels are associated with specific veterinarians. Ask the kennel how your cat will be cared for in case of illness. If the kennel isn't associated with your veterinarian's hospital, you may be able to request that your regular veterinarian be contacted if your cat becomes ill.

Visiting a Kennel

Before kenneling your cat anywhere, visit the facilities to see whether they appear safe, comfortable, clean, and well staffed. Kennel facilities range from basic cages to more elaborate accommodations, but the most important considerations are the safety and cleanliness of the facility and the competence of the staff. Ask how many animals are routinely kenneled at a time and how many staff members care for them. More staff members and fewer pets may mean more attention per pet. Your questions should be answered to your satisfaction so that you feel comfortable leaving your cat at the facility. Some facilities have cameras that allow owners to view their pets through the Internet.

When you visit a kennel, the air should not smell unpleasant. Proper air ventilation significantly decreases the risk of transmission of upper respiratory infections. Animals that are currently boarded should appear clean and well cared for.

The cage sizes should seem adequate. Each cat should have his or her own cage and should not be too close to other cats. This helps prevent aggression and the spread of disease. Cats shouldn't be boarded

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in the same room as dogs because their presence and/or barking can be stressful for cats, which prefer a quiet environment. Some kennels play music, which may help keep cats calm.

Kenneled cats need to be provided with stimuli and the opportunity for exercise. Ask the staff how often the animals are fed and exercised. Some

Choices and Considerations

kennels offer cat cages with multiple levels, giving cats a place to climb and perch. Some cages have scratching posts.

Kennels may offer extras, such as more play time, treats, or grooming, at an additional cost.

If your cat has special needs, such as a special diet or medication, ask whether the staff can accommodate these needs. Some kennels may not be able to give medication as often as your cat requires.

Kenneling Requirements for Cats

Cats that will be kenneled must be free of contagious diseases. The kennel may require a health certificate from your veterinarian and proof of your cat's most recent vaccinations. Some kennels have specific vaccination requirements. Don't assume that your cat has had all of the required vaccinations without checking with the kennel first. Most of the time, a letter from the regular veterinarian is all that is required. Sometimes, additional vaccinations may be needed. In general, most kennels require the FVRCP (feline distemper combination) vaccine to be given according to the general practice of the area (every 1 to 3 years). Rabies vaccinations are administered according to state law.

If your cat has fleas or other external or internal parasites, he or she should be treated before arrival or on admission to the kennel.

If your cat has a medical problem that is stable or is being treated, tell the kennel when making

reservations to ensure that the facility is comfortable with the responsibility for your cat.

What to Take to the Kennel

Take your cat's food. An abrupt change in a cat's food may cause diarrhea or a lack of appetite, especially when the cat is in a stressful environment.

Take your cat's brand of litter, but not the litter-box. Some cats may be reluctant to use a different type of litter, especially in a strange environment.

Give the kennel the phone numbers of several contacts in case of an emergency. Provide the number(s) at which you can be reached while you're away. Provide a friend's or relative's number to call if you're unavailable. This person should be able to make emergency decisions; discuss your wishes with this person before you leave. In addition, give the kennel your veterinarian's number.

If your cat receives medications at home, they should be continued during kenneling. Take the medications to the kennel, and ensure that the kennel is aware of the problem being treated.

Ask the kennel if you can bring your cat's favorite toy and/or bed as well as a shirt that a family member has worn. Familiar items and smells from home can help make your cat feel more comfortable.

To give your cat some privacy and reduce his or her stress in the kennel, take paper bags or a high-sided bed or box in which your cat can hide. Ask the staff to ensure that your cat always has a hiding place.