

Kenneling Your Dog

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

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

Ask Your Veterinarian

If you need to kennel your dog, your veterinarian may have a kennel or may be able to recommend one. The advantage to kenneling your dog at your veterinarian's practice is that if your dog 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 dog 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 dog becomes ill.

Visiting a Kennel

Before kenneling your dog 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 dog at the facility. Some facilities have cameras that allow owners to view their pets through the Internet.

When kenneling your dog, provide emergency contact information and take your dog's food, collar and leash, medication, favorite toy, and bed.

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 dog should have his or her own cage and should not be too close to other dogs. This helps prevent aggression and the spread of disease. Some kennels play music, which may help keep dogs calm.

Kenneled dogs need to be provided with stimuli and the opportunity for exercise. Ask the staff how often the animals are fed and exercised (How often are dogs walked? Are they given time in a large enclosed area?).

Kennels may offer extras, such as more exercise, treats, or grooming, at an additional cost. Ensuring that your dog gets plenty of exercise may be worth the extra cost.

If your dog has special needs, such as a special diet or medication, ask whether the staff can accommodate

Choices and Considerations

these needs. Some kennels may not be able to give medication as often as your dog requires.

Kenneling Requirements for Dogs

Dogs that will be kenneled must be free of contagious diseases. The kennel may require a health certificate from your veterinarian and proof of your dog's most recent vaccinations. Some kennels have specific vaccination requirements. Don't assume that your dog 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. As a general rule, most kennels require dogs to be current on DHLPP (distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, and parvovirus) and kennel cough (*Bordetella bronchiseptica*) vaccinations as well as rabies vaccinations, which are administered according to state law. The kennel cough vaccination is usually administered yearly, but some kennels may also require it shortly before kenneling.

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

If your dog 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 dog.

What to Take to the Kennel

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