

Tips For Pet Care When You Travel
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With the holidays coming up, many people may be traveling with or without their pets. Here are some things to make this experience easier on both of you.

If you are taking your pet with you in the car, make sure your dog or cat is accustomed to car rides before starting on a long trip. If not, acclimate her with short trips around town. If your pet is not at all familiar with the car, and many cats are not, you may need to start by just letting her sit in the car until she becomes calm.

Both dogs and cats will be much safer in a car if they ride in a pet crate. If your pet isn't crate trained, be sure and do so before leaving. If your pet does not travel well, talk with your veterinarian about the pros and cons of anti-anxiety medication for him.

If you've decided to leave your pet with a housesitter, make sure this person first comes to visit while you are home. Give the sitter a chance to make friends with your pets in your presence, and then schedule a practice visit when you aren't home.

Some dogs may not let a person they do not know well come inside the house if you aren't there. Cats may hide and the sitter may not be able to find them to make sure they are all right, or to administer medication if necessary.

If you encounter these problems, try taking the intermediate step of being home but allow the housesitter to let herself in rather than answer the door. Don't forget to ask for references from professional sitting services, and make sure that friends or neighbor children who will be caring for your pets can be relied upon to provide consistent care.

If you choose to board your pets over the holidays, you'll probably be out of luck if you don't already have reservations. Many kennels are booked for Christmas by July. If you will be boarding, a trial run is also recommended, especially if your pet has not previously been to that particular kennel.

Take your pet to the facility and have her meet as many people as possible who will be caring for her. Try leaving her for a few hours to see how she reacts to the environment.

Some kennels are now specializing in cat boarding, and can provide tall cages with scratching trees and perches which better meet the behavioral needs of cats than a square cage. Others will take dogs for walks or allow them play time with other dogs who have been screened for compatibility.

If the kennel will be doing any obedience training with your dog, make sure you know exactly what type of methods will be used. You want to be sure that your dog will not be subjected to harsh training methods in your absence.

As for our pets, we'll spend part of the holiday at home with them, and later a neighbor will care for Buffett our cat, and our Dalmatians will spend part of the holiday with their "other mother" in Gunnison while we visit friends in Telluride. Happy holidays!