



Keeping pets safe while you are away

RSPCA COMPANION ANIMALS PET CARE FACTSHEET



IN THE EXCITEMENT OF PREPARING FOR A HOLIDAY OR WEEKEND AWAY, DON'T FORGET TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR YOUR PETS.

It can take time to sort out care arrangements for your pet and so you should always do this well in advance. If you are not taking your pet with you when you go away, they will still need looking after when you're not there.

Never leave your pet on their own without a responsible person to care for them; you must make sure they get the care they need. When someone else is looking after your pet they too have a [legal responsibility](#) to ensure your pet's welfare and you should make sure that they understand your pet's [needs](#) and any special requirements that he or she may have.



There are a number of options to ensure your pet is cared for when you are away. You can leave them with friends or family, have a pet-sitter, or take them to a boarding establishment.

Staying with friends or family

Many pets can find the absence of their owner and/or a change of routine stressful. Asking responsible familiar friends or family to look after them can often be the least stressful option.

It will depend on your pet as to whether they would be happier to stay in their own home, or to go and stay with your friends or family. Either way it is important that all of your pet's needs are met, and that you leave clear instructions on how to look after your pet, including:

- dietary requirements;
- daily health checks (especially for small animals to check that they are eating and toileting properly, and to check they are healthy i.e. fly-strike in rabbits);
- how and when to exercise them;
- if and when they may need any medication and how to give it to them;
- and how to socialise with them.

If your cat or dog is staying with friends, make sure they have an identification disc with their temporary address.

Whoever you chose to care for your pets while you are away make sure that you:

- Are confident that they will care for your pet properly;
- Give them clear instructions on how to care for your pet;
- Leave the name and number of your vet and, if possible, a number where you can be contacted in case of emergencies;
- Keep your pet's vaccinations and flea and worming treatments up-to-date.





Keeping pets safe while you are away

RSPCA COMPANION ANIMALS PET CARE FACTSHEET



Pet-sitters

If you do not have family or friends who can look after your pet, another option is to arrange for a pet-sitter. As always it is important that you leave your pet in the care of a responsible and reputable person that will meet all of your pets needs as well as respect your property. The [National Association of Registered Petsitters](#) (NARP) can provide you with a list of their members.

When choosing a pet-sitter make sure that you:

- Meet them before employing them. You need to be confident that they will care for your pets needs properly, and that your pet gets on well with them;
- Check their references;
- Check they have insurance to cover your pet in case of an emergency.



When leaving your pet in the care of a pet-sitter it may help your pet to settle if they have some 'introductory sessions' so that your pet can get used to their new carer, and that the carer can get to know them.

Always make sure you:

- Are confident that they will care for your pet properly;
- Give them clear instructions on how to care for your pet;
- Leave the name and number of your vet and, if possible, a number where you can be contacted in case of emergencies;
- Keep your pet's vaccinations and flea and worming treatments up-to-date.



Boarding establishments

When choosing a boarding establishment (i.e. kennel, cattery, or small animal boarder) it is important that you take the time to find one that will suit your pet, as each establishment will vary and a boarding environment can be stressful. If you have not boarded your pet before, your vet may be able to suggest a reputable place. Ask friends and family for recommendations of places that they have used. You can also look in the yellow pages, local papers, or contact local councils and pet shops. However, before deciding on using a boarder you should always visit each one.

Choosing where to send your pet can seem very daunting so here are a few things that you can check when visiting potential boarders:

- Do they have a licence? All kennels and catteries should have an up-to-date licence from their local council.
- Do they have insurance cover in case your pet needs emergency care?
- Are the facilities clean, dry, draught-free, secure and do they provide shade? It is important that the facilities are suitable for your pet and that it will not be at risk while staying with the boarder.
- Do the animals currently in their care look clean, happy and healthy?





Keeping pets safe while you are away

RSPCA COMPANION ANIMALS PET CARE FACTSHEET



Environment

- Will they exercise your pet, and provide it with the appropriate social contact (i.e. human contact, and allowing friendly dogs to interact with other dogs whilst on a walk)?
- Do they make daily checks of the animals in their care, to make sure they are eating and toileting properly? This is especially important for small animals.
- Do they keep predator and prey animals separate? Boarding establishments should not keep predator and prey species in close proximity (i.e. rats near cats; mice near rats).
- Do they ask for proof of vaccination? This is important to stop the spread of contagious diseases. For information on vaccination ask your [vet](#).
- How many staff do they have per animal? It is important that there are enough people to look after the needs of the animals in their care.
- Do they make you feel welcome?
- Do they ask about your pets diet and health, and if your pet has any special needs, or medical requirements?



Diet

The Feline Advisory Bureau makes inspections of boarding catteries and publishes a list of recommended catteries. For information visit the [FAB listed boarding catteries website](#).

To help your pet settle it is a good idea to take them along to the boarding establishment for a few 'introductory sessions' so that they are slowly introduced to the unfamiliar environment and people. In the case of dogs and cats this will also help them learn that you'll return.



Behaviour

When leaving your pet in the care of a boarding establishment make sure that you:

- Are confident that they will care for your pet properly;
- Give them clear instructions on how to care for your pet;
- Leave the name and number of your vet and, if possible, a number where you can be contacted in case of emergencies;
- Keep your pet's vaccinations and flea and worming treatments up-to-date.



Company

For further information on any of the topics discussed see our 'Other possible links' box at the end of this document.

It is a criminal offence to leave any animal without making proper arrangements for their welfare.



Health and welfare



Keeping pets safe while you are away

RSPCA COMPANION ANIMALS PET CARE FACTSHEET



OTHER POSSIBLE LINKS:

- Information on your responsibility under the Animal Welfare Act <http://www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/changingthelaw/whatwechanged/animalwelfareact>
- The welfare needs of specific species <http://www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets>
- How to find a vet <http://www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/whatwedo/vetcare/findavet>
- Feline Advisory Bureau listed catteries http://www.fabcats.org/catteries/infosheets/choosing_a_boarding_cattery/choosing_boarding_cattery.html
- National Association of Registered Petsitters <http://www.dogsit.com/>
- Taking your pet on holiday http://www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/general/holiday/-/article/CAD_TakingYourPetOnHoliday

Links to the web pages of other organisations are provided for additional information only and do not imply any endorsement by the RSPCA of those organisations or of any content on the website.



This pet care sheet has been produced by the RSPCA Companion Animals Department (CAD/KW 04.09.13). This leaflet is provided for general information only and is not intended to be relied upon as specific advice. Whilst we try to ensure that the information is correct, we cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information, nor for any reliance on or use of the leaflet.

