

Guidelines: Preparing Your Dog For a Boarding Kennel

It's time to head to Las Vegas for your long awaited week of vacation. But, what do you do with THE DOG? Some people are unable to face the prospects of boarding Fido and therefore, they stay home. Others either impose on their friends or hire "pet sitters" to come into their homes. And finally, a vast number of people choose to board their pets in kennels.

Before committing your dog to a particular kennel, you should visit the facility for a personal inspection. Does it appear to be clean, does it smell clean, is it well lit and ventilated? How is the temperature? Are the cages and runs of adequate size? A phone call to the American Boarding Kennels Association (719-667-1600) will determine if the kennel under consideration meets accepted standards and is accredited.

After you've made your final kennel selection, it's time to prepare your dog for its visit. First and foremost, make sure your dog's vaccinations are up to date. A kennel will reject your dog if his rabies vaccination isn't current. Furthermore, even though you've selected a sparklingly clean boarding facility, your dog is subject to any number of communicable illnesses always present in a boarding population. A current shot record is good insurance against some of these diseases.

If at all possible, you should consider stopping by the kennel with your dog for a brief visit. He can meet the staff and become somewhat familiar with the surroundings. An overnight stay will do wonders to prepare the dog for his longer visit.

Always provide as much information as possible to the kennel staff. Obviously they will need to know about any medications they'll have to administer, food allergies, whether or not the dog socializes well with other animals and what, if any, particular fears or phobias he might have. If you happen to be boarding more than one dog, you might want to request that they be housed in the same pen or allowed to exercise at the same time in the same run.

If Fido requires a special diet, the kennel may request that you provide them with a supply of his food. This will usually depend on the extent of the dog's special requirements and will be settled in advance of the dog's visit. Make sure the kennel has the name and phone number of your veterinarian and a phone number where they can reach you in case of an emergency.

Most dogs will benefit from bringing familiar items with them. A special toy, their blanket, or even one of your slippers will comfort them and stave off feelings of being abandoned. By all means, don't wash the item; familiar smells are half the battle, so don't destroy them.

When packing and preparing for your trip, try to go about it as calmly and casually as possible. Hectic packing and rushing about will alert Rover that something is amiss and by the time you're ready to transport him to the kennel, he'll already be under stress. Gather his kennel items and have them in the car prior to loading Rover.

When dropping him off at the kennel, try to remain as nonchalant and as calm as possible. Don't be overly affectionate or do anything that might cause Rover to attach too much significance to his plight. The objective is to minimize, rather than exaggerate. Keep it low key - no long goodbyes, no tears and no emotion. After handing Rover's lead to a kennel staffer, allow the staffer to distract the dog and quietly slip out.

If you're a frequent traveler, Rover will get used to being boarded and in most cases will look forward to the experience, especially if he gets an opportunity to mix with other dogs at the kennel. He'll get to know the staff and look forward to seeing them.

Once both dog and owner get used to the idea of boarding and become completely comfortable with the experience, being separated will become much less stressful. While away, the owner will be at peace, confident that his faithful friend is safe and being well cared for. And, Rover will be able to lay back and enjoy his vacation as well.

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