



When you're away...

Leave your pets in safe hands



Planning for a holiday

Planning for a holiday can be an exciting time but don't forget to include arrangements for your pets. Whether you plan to take them with you or not, it can take time to sort out their care so it's best to start getting things ready well in advance.

If you're considering taking your dog with you on holiday, there's a lot to plan and consider before you book. Preparation is key to a stress-free holiday – for you and your dog.

Cats, rabbits and small animals who aren't familiar with travelling and visiting new places shouldn't be taken on holiday because the experience is likely to be too stressful for them.

You must never leave your pets on their own without a responsible person to care for them. When someone else is looking after your pets, they have a legal responsibility to ensure that your pets are cared for properly.

You may want to consider whether friends or family are able to care for them or you could arrange a pet sitter, or take them to a local boarding establishment.

It is your responsibility to ensure your pet is properly cared for when you're away.

Friends and family

Many pets can find the absence of their owner and/or a change of routine stressful.

To help keep things as familiar and as stress-free as possible, asking responsible friends or family to look after them in your own home can often be the best option. This is especially true for most cats, rabbits and small animals who aren't familiar with travelling and visiting new places.

For dogs, it will depend on the individual as to whether they would be happier to stay in their home, or to go and stay with friends or family.

If it's not possible or appropriate for friends and family to look after your pet in your own home your pet may be able to stay with them.

Either way, you'll need to provide your friend or family member with all the information they'll need to care for your pet properly – see our holiday checklist.

For more information, go to: www.rspca.org.uk/holiday



Choosing the right pet sitter

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 who will meet all of your pet's needs, as well as respect your property. The National Association of Registered Pet Sitters (www.narpsuk.co.uk) 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 pet's needs properly
- see a copy of their police check or Criminal Records Bureau certificate, to check that they don't have a criminal background
- 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 they can get used to their new carer.

Make sure you give the pet sitter all the important information they need to care for your pet.

DON'T FORGET!

It's a legal requirement to have your dog microchipped and to keep their details up to date. It's also just as important for cats, rabbits and ferrets – it's the most reliable way to identify your pet. This is especially important if your pet is staying away from home while you're away.

It's also a good idea to create an additional ID disc for your dog with their temporary address i.e. that of your friend/relative or boarding establishment.



TOP TIPS FOR DOGS

- To help your dog settle in boarding kennels it may be helpful to take them along for a few 'introductory sessions' where they can familiarise themselves with the area and the people who will be caring for them.
- Some dogs have things which can worry or scare them – this could be anything from other dogs to loud noises. Make sure whoever is caring for your dog is aware of these things and understands the importance of protecting your dog from them.
- Dogs are intelligent and active animals so make sure they will have enough exercise and things to do to prevent them from becoming bored.

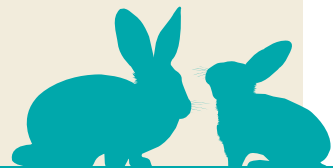




Holiday checklist

Whatever arrangements you make, use our checklist to make sure whoever is responsible for your pet has everything they'll need:

- Details of your pet's usual routine and the importance of trying to stick to this as much as possible.
- Provide their usual food and treats with clear written instructions on how much to feed and when. This could be difficult for animals that need fresh food, so make sure you leave details of the foods your pet will need and where to buy them.
- Your emergency contact details.
- Your vet's contact details – including their out-of-hours service.
- If your pet isn't staying in your home, provide a familiar smelling item. For dogs and cats this could be a blanket or a worn item of your clothing and for rabbits and small animals, some used, unsoiled nesting material.
- Any important information about their health, including a supply of any medications they need to take – with clear instructions on how they should be given and when.
- Information about your pet's behaviour and personality including their likes and dislikes.
- Details about how and when to exercise your pet.
- Equipment: for example, leads, collars, litter tray, scratching post, and toys.



Boarding establishments



If you can't leave your pet with friends, family or a pet sitter, the best option might be to find a good boarding establishment.

When choosing a kennel, cattery, or small animal boarder, it is important that you take 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, ask your vet or friends and family for recommendations. You can also look in local papers, online or contact local councils. However, before deciding on using a boarder you should **always visit each one**.

A few things to check out 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?
- Will they exercise your pet and/or give them the space they need to express natural behaviours?
- Will they have appropriate social contact i.e. will they spend time with them each day?
- Is there a suitable system in place for monitoring pets? An evening check should be carried out in addition to regular checks in the daytime.
- Do they make sure predator and prey species are kept separate in order to prevent stress?
- Do they ask for proof of vaccination? This is important to stop the spread of contagious diseases – for information on vaccinations, speak to your vet.
- How many staff do they have – are there enough people to look after the needs of the animals in their care?
- Do they ask about your pet's diet and health, and can they accommodate any special needs, or medical requirements your pet may have?
- Do they make you feel welcome and do the animals currently in their care look clean, happy and healthy?
- Do they require dogs and cats to be up to date with flea and worm treatment?

If the boarding establishment owner isn't happy to answer your questions or you aren't satisfied that they'll be able to care for your pet properly walk away and find another reputable boarder who will be able to care for your pet properly.



TOP TIPS FOR RABBITS AND SMALL ANIMALS

- If you do have to transport your rabbits and small animals, transport them with their familiar companion(s) to help reduce stress and possible problems with reintroductions.
- Transport small animals like hamsters in their home cage. If this is not possible, transfer them into a smaller, secure pet carrier.
- Move some used, unsoiled nesting material into travel carriers and new homes – this will smell familiar to your pets and can be reassuring.
- Make sure that rabbits and small animals have constant access to food and water while being transported.
- Provide carers with your pets' usual food. Remember that fresh food can quickly spoil, so leave details of what food to get and where to buy it.
- Make sure that rabbits/small animals will be kept well away from dogs and cats as their presence would be a frightening experience for them.





TOP TIPS FOR CATS

- Cats always need opportunities to hide as it helps them to feel safe. If your cat is staying away from home, make sure they are provided with hiding places such as an igloo bed or even a cardboard box.
- Many cats get stressed being in their carrier. Help them learn to feel safe in their carrier by leaving it out in a quiet spot in the house, adding cosy bedding and regularly placing tasty treats and favourite toys inside.
- Always keep a familiar smelling item in the carrier when transporting your cat.



Photos: Joe Murphy x 2, Philip Toscano x 2, Andrew Forsyth, Chris Brignell, Angela Hampton/RSPCA Photolibrary



Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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