

KENNELING YOUR CAT

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

While kennels range from the barebones to the ultra-fancy, keep in mind that the frills are meant mainly for owners. The cat really isn't interested in what color his enclosure is. What is important is general safety and the friendliness and competence of the staff.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A KENNEL

- The first thing you should do is visit the kennel before boarding your cat. Most kennels welcome these visits, and it gives you a chance to see their facilities and ask specific questions. Your questions should be answered to your satisfaction, so that you will feel comfortable leaving your pet when you are away.
- The kennel should be clean inside and out. Proper sanitation is one of the most important aspects of preventing the spread of contagious diseases. The cages and runs should look and smell clean. Animals that are currently boarding should be clean and appear well cared for.
- Indoors, the boarding facility should have adequate cage sizes. Each cat should have her own individual cage, and not be too near other cats. Cats should not have any contact with one another. This decreases the potential of aggression and spread of disease. Cats also shouldn't be boarded together with dogs, which tend to bark. Cats prefer a quiet environment. Even the presence of some dogs might cause a great deal of stress in certain cats, especially if the dogs are within direct view.
- The general boarding environment should be pleasant and feel comfortable. Natural lighting from windows is great, but if not available, adequate indoor lighting should be present. The area should be relatively quiet, although some kennels play music or the radio, which can also be quite soothing. The air should circulate well and not smell stagnant. With cats, the biggest potential infectious problem while boarding is upper respiratory infections. Proper air ventilation significantly decreases the risk of transmission of this disease.
- Even though cats are being boarded, they still need to be provided with certain stimuli and opportunity for some exercise. Some kennels offer cat cages with multiple levels, giving cats a place to climb and perch. Some cages have scratching posts, or are partially carpeted. These provide greater comfort, but are much more difficult to keep clean.
- Find out how many animals are routinely boarded at a single time, and the number of staff taking care of the animals. More people and fewer animals may mean more attention for the individual animals.
- Some kennels have associations with specific veterinarians either on the premises or working near by. Discuss how your cat will be taken care of in the event of an illness. The kennel's veterinarian may be the one contacted for treatment to be provided, or it might be your regular veterinarian. If you have a specific preference, discuss this with the kennel owner.
- If your cat is on medication that is given several times a day, make sure that the kennel personnel are able to administer it appropriately. Some kennels may not be able to give medication as often as your cat requires.

- Some boarding facilities offer an added benefit of grooming services. Consider having your cat groomed the day he or she is scheduled to go home. It is always nice for your cat to come back from the kennel smelling clean, fresh and newly groomed.

KENNEL REQUIREMENTS

- All cats to be boarded should be healthy and free of contagious diseases. If your cat has a medical problem that is stable or currently under treatment, let the kennel know prior to boarding to make sure they are comfortable boarding your cat.
- A kennel may require a health certificate from your veterinarian and proof of your cat's most recent vaccinations.
- If your cat has fleas or other external or internal parasites, he or she should be treated prior to arrival or on admission to the kennel.
- Certain kennels have very specific requirements regarding vaccinations. Don't assume that your cat has had all of the vaccinations required without checking with the kennel first. For example, some veterinarians are not routinely vaccinating each year for FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus and Panleukopenia). These veterinarians may be giving these vaccines every three years, yet the boarding facility still requires them yearly. Additionally, a kennel may have specific vaccine requirements (i.e. feline bordetella) that are not routinely administered by your veterinarian. In all cases, check with the kennel so that any discrepancies can be addressed prior to boarding. Most of the time, a letter from your veterinarian will be all that is required. Other times, additional vaccines may need to be given.
- As a general rule, most kennels require FVRCP vaccinations to be given according to the general practice of the area (either yearly or every three years). Rabies vaccines are administered according to individual state law.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BRING TO THE KENNEL

- It is always a good idea to bring your cat's own food to the kennel. Abrupt changes in food, may lead to diarrhea in some cats, especially when they are in a more stressful environment, away from home. Abrupt dietary changes in cats may also lead to anorexia, since most cats do not like changes in their routine. If your cat is on a special diet or has special dietary needs, make sure the kennel is aware of this, and that they follow your specific instructions.
- For many cats, bringing their own litter is a good idea. Some cats may be reluctant to use a different type of litter, especially in a strange environment.
- If your cat has a special bed or favorite toy, ask if you can bring them with your pet. Familiar items from home will make your pet feel more comfortable while you are away.
- The kennel should have several contact numbers available so, if needed, the appropriate people can be contacted in the unlikely event of an emergency. First, provide the number (if possible) where you can be reached while you are away. If you are unavailable, a friend or relative's number should be accessible. This person should be able to make any emergency decisions if needed; discuss your wishes with this person prior to your leaving. The kennel should also have your veterinarian's number in case there are medical problems, especially on going medical problems with your pet.
- If your cat typically receives medications at home, they should be continued while boarding. Bring the medications with you to the kennel, and make sure the kennel is aware of the specific problem being treated. If you do not feel that kenneling is appropriate for your cat, you may want to consider hiring a pet sitter. These animal loving people will come to your home to care for your pet. Some may even spend the night.