



# VETLAND

Animal Hospital



## HOLIDAYS – HOME AND AWAY

Holiday time is coming, and many of us are already dreaming of warm sandy beaches or frosty ski slopes.

*But what about Frisky and Friendly?*

### Pets on Vacation



It's wonderful to imagine Frisky playing in the surf, and you can't bear the thought of Friendly in a cage for three weeks. But before you decide to take the animals with you, think realistically about their welfare: *will the travelling be stressful for them? How will they react to living in a strange place? Will the accommodation be secure, or will they have to be locked up when they're not with you?* And don't forget to think about yourself and your holiday companions: will you have time to spend with the animals, and to care for them, or will that responsibility limit your vacation pleasure?



If you're certain that both you and the animals will enjoy the time away together, here are some things to think about:

- Some holiday homes and vacation resorts do allow pets of various kinds. There are a number of publications which list animal-friendly accommodation, for example the *SA Pet Friendly Directory*, available at most pet shops. But the best is always to call and speak to the staff of the lodging yourself. The listing may say they accept 'dogs', but are they happy with two 70 kg Great Danes in a single room?
- How far will you be driving? Factor in a rest stop every two hours or so for Frisky to stretch his legs and drink water.
  - Do you have proper travelling equipment, such as a travel crate, window guards, or a seat belt for Frisky?
  - Will you be able to buy Friendly's normal food at your destination? If not, be sure to take enough with you. And don't forget any special toys, bedding, brushes, etc.
  - Does Friendly get motion sick / car sick? Do you need medication to calm her for travelling? Consult your veterinarian to learn what treatments might be best. If your animal is a first time

*A man wrote to a small hotel in the Midwest that he planned to visit on his vacation." I would very much like to bring my dog with me. He is well-groomed and very well behaved. Would you be willing to permit me to keep him in my room with me at night???"*

*An immediate reply came from the hotel owner, who wrote: "I've been operating this hotel for many years. In all that time, I've never had a dog steal towels, bedclothes, silverware or pictures off the walls. I've never had to evict a dog in the middle of the night for being drunk and disorderly. And I've never had a dog run out on a hotel bill.*

*Yes, indeed, your dog is welcome at my hotel. And, if your dog will vouch for you, you're welcome to stay here, too."*

traveller, it is generally a good idea to have a trial run before you leave, so you can gauge the effect of the medication.

- Do Frisky and Friendly have collars, tags and microchips, in case they get lost in a strange place?

## **Kennels / Catteries**

There are many advantages to housing your animals in a professional boarding facility. The animals don't experience the stress of travelling to your destination; they will receive more attention and supervision than if they were left alone at home all day; and they will be secure in a facility specifically designed to stop escape artists. However, there are also disadvantages, not least of which is the stress of unfamiliar surroundings. And even in the best facility, the proximity to other animals may expose your pet to health problems.



If you've decided that boarding is the best option for you and your animals, what should you look for (besides the obvious issues of availability and cost) in choosing a residential facility?

- ask for recommendations from friends and family. There's nothing better than knowing that someone you care for was satisfied with the service.
- inspect the facilities. What size are the cages? (Small cages are not necessarily bad, if provision is made for the dogs to have exercise in a larger run or camp). Is the facility secure? Is it clean and well-ventilated? (Be reasonable when judging cleanliness – a cat may have used the litter box within minutes of its being changed.)
- how frequently are the animals monitored? Is there 24 hour supervision? Will you be able to leave your animal in a facility that does not have 24 hour supervision? (Be honest, do you get up in the middle of the night to check on Frisky and Friendly?)
- what arrangements does the kennel or cattery have with veterinary personnel in case animals become ill? If Friendly is on medication or requires special care, can the staff provide the necessary service?
- is the facility willing to do customized feeding? Will they feed your pet according to its own schedule, with its own diet?
- does the facility require proof of vaccination? This is a protection for your dogs and cats, as it ensures that other pets boarding in the facility are not likely to be ill. Are in-coming animals examined to make sure they do not carry ticks and fleas, or appear ill, before they are taken to the housing area?
- if the facility houses both dogs and cats, are they separated so that the cats are not stressed by the sight, sound and smell of dogs?
- can the facility provide exercise and play opportunities, and an enriched environment.
- are animals from different families ever housed or allowed to play together? This increases the risk of spread of disease, or injury due to aggression, and should be avoided.
- are you allowed to bring your own bedding, toys, etc. to help the animal adapt to its new surroundings?
- do the staff seem knowledgeable and caring? Did they ask you lots of questions when you made the initial inquiry or booking – did they ask name, age, sex, breed, eating habits,

behavioural issues (e.g. fear of thunder storms), vaccination status, name of your vet, contact in case of emergency? If the staff did not ask these questions, then the kennel / cattery does not have adequate information to do its job properly.

And don't forget yourself. What extras do you, the owner, need for your furry friend, in order that you will vacation peacefully. Grooming? Bathing? Obedience training? Long walks in the woods? All the frills of a spa, or just basic good care? Will you be able to enjoy your holiday knowing Friendly is locked up in a cage, no matter the size? If you won't be able to relax, then maybe you need to look at other options, such as home care.

If Frisky has never been kennelled before, it would be a good idea to first board him for a short time, such as overnight or a weekend, so that you know how well he will adapt, before you leave for an extended period.

Be sure you know the kennel operating hours, contact details, etc. There's nothing worse than arriving back at an airport, and then having to blitz through traffic to get to the kennel before it closes. Plan to pick Frisky up the next day, when everyone is re-established at home. And don't forget to notify the kennel if you are held up by flight delays, car break-downs, etc.

## **Home Care**

Just like the residential boarding facilities, there are pros and cons to home care. Generally it is less stressful to animals to stay at home, even if their humans are away. But it has its downside too, most particularly if the care-giver will only come in once or twice a day, for a limited time. What will Frisky and Friendly do the rest of the time? Bored or lonely animals may get into mischief you can't even imagine! So the best solution is for someone to live in, as that provides the care most resembling your own. But often a part-time sitter is the only option available.

Whether live-in or drop-by, be sure you have discussed the following with any prospective pet-sitter:

- ask for references from previous clients. You are leaving your home and your pets in this person's care, so it is important to know that the sitter is honest, responsible and capable of solving any problems which arise.
- how many times a day will the sitter visit?
- do you expect the sitter to interact with your pet, or only to check, feed and leave? Specify if Frisky must have a ½ hour walk, or if Friendly must be brushed daily.
- do you need other services (e.g. plants watered, newspapers picked up, lights turned on and off)
- will the sitter have access to your home? Check with your insurance agent whether there are any implications according to your policy.
- Do you want the sitter to contact you with regular reports? Or only to call on an 'if required' basis.
- what are the backup arrangements? If the care-giver gets sick or has a car accident, who will be his / her substitute? Will anyone know the person is looking after your animals?
- is your home and yard properly animal proof? Does the swimming pool have a well fitting cover? Can Frisky get out under or through the fence? Can Friendly climb up the tree and over

the wall? Don't expect the care-giver to solve problems that you haven't got around to remedying.

- what about the neighbours? Be sure the neighbours know you have a sitter, and that they have his / her contact details. If Frisky becomes bored and lonely and howls at the moon at night, who should the neighbours call?

## **General**

Whether you decide on a kennel, cattery or at-home care-giver, be sure they have contact details for you. If you might be out of reach, then be sure that you have discussed questions such as:



- may they take Frisky to a vet if they suspect he is ill?
- must they use your regular vet, or may they use another?
- is there a maximum amount of money which you are willing to pay for medical care?
- what if a decision on euthanasia is required?
- who else should they call in an emergency? Relatives or friends?

Be honest with the facility or care-giver. Be sure they know that Frisky dashes out the door whenever it's opened, or that Frisky is hyper-sensitive to thunderstorms. And don't forget the little things – perhaps you have trained Frisky to 'sit' before he gets his dinner. They should do the same.

And remember, leaving animals unattended, even if food and water are provided, is not an option. Accidents happen. Food can become wet or infested, water buckets can be overturned. Your animal is your responsibility, as well as your pleasure, so plan properly, and you should all enjoy the holidays.

Please do not hesitate to contact our reception to enquiry for nr's or any other needed advice.

Friendly paw greetings

# Happy Holidays

