



## CHOOSING A BOARDING FACILITY

We all enjoy being with our dogs, but at some point you'll need to leave him home while you take a vacation or go on a business trip. Ideally, you'd like to leave him in the care of a family member or trusted friend, but that's not always possible. When that's the case, you need to find the right solution so that he's happy and well-cared for and you can relax.

It's not the most luxurious kennel that's the quality facility. It's the one that is safe, clean and provides your dog with a relaxed, but stimulating environment.

The most important thing you can do is to visit the facility. Be sure to make an appointment with the owners ahead of time. Most are eager to show off their operation. Ask the owner if it's appropriate for you to bring your dog with you during this first visit. Until you check the place out, you might not want to bring him into an environment that gives off bad vibes. Pay attention to how the facility smells. Are the water bowls filled and clean? How about the bedding or sleeping areas? Do the dogs seem happy and comfortable? Is there adequate opportunity for outdoor exercise? Can the dogs be together for playtime, if appropriate? Can they be separated if necessary?

Talk with the owners and any staff you encounter. Are they friendly? Do they seem comfortable around the dogs? Do they seem to enjoy what they're doing? Do they have a relationship with the dogs in their care? Are they knowledgeable about dog care and behavior?

Ask a lot of questions before hand. If the staff hasn't asked you to provide vaccination information, they probably haven't asked other clients and that's a bad sign. Vaccinations are important at all times, but especially when large numbers of dogs are interacting in relatively close quarters. Do they take the time to find out a little about your dog, such as feeding rituals and behavioral quirks? If your dog is a barker, what are they going to do if he barks constantly while you're away?

Does he dig? What precautions do they have to prevent him from escaping? The last phone call you want to receive when you're away is the one that tells you your dog is running loose.

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What happens if your dog gets sick or injured while you're gone? Does the kennel have a working relationship with an emergency vet? Are you prepared to authorize treatment and to what level of expense?

Does the facility offer other services like training or grooming? Are they willing to send you email or video updates? Make sure you decide what you need before you leave. Even if you don't have a need to board your dog, it's a good idea to take him for an overnight stay at someone else's house during his first 6 or 7 months. It will help him build confidence in his ability to be away from you. Once he gets over his initial anxiety, he'll probably have a great time and come home tuckered out from his new experience. If it's the right situation, it will also help you feel better about leaving him, if you have to, in the future.

Being away from home can be stressful, but if you find the right facility it can also be a blast! You might even find yourself boarding your dog just so you can have a day off once in awhile!