

Today, more and more concerned pet owners are choosing to board their dogs at boarding kennels. Kennel operators who belong to the American Boarding Kennels Association are professionals pet-care providers who make a public commitment to quality pet care and who subscribe to the ABKA Code of Ethics and the Bill of Rights for Boarded Pets. Their kennels often offer a variety of pet care services such as day care, pet-sitting, special exercise programs, cat boarding, grooming, retail sales, training, pet shipping, etc.

What are the advantages of boarding your dog?

The vast majority of dogs adapt well and enjoy their stay at the kennel. For some dogs—puppies which have not had their immunizations, extremely old dogs with chronic illnesses, very aggressive dogs, dogs which require medication more than twice a day—you might consider boarding with your veterinarian, or asking your kennel to provide in-home care. Keep in mind, however, that “pet-checking” in your home, even when it is performed by a trained ABKA professional, does not offer the same level of trained supervision that boarding does. Furthermore, when you are not at home with your dog his behavior might differ significantly from his normal behavior. For instance he might try to “escape” to find you, or, he might become destructive or aggressive toward the visiting pet-checker.

You should definitely consider boarding your dog rather than taking him on vacation with you. Many motels will not accept dogs, and some that do charge extra and become very upset if your dog annoys their other guests. Pets can become ill as a result of traveling because of the frequent changes in water, etc. Many dogs suffer heat prostration while locked in the car as master goes sightseeing, eating or shopping. The national parks have an abundance of lost dogs which somehow got away

from their owners and couldn't be found before master had to leave for home. Another serious risk is exposure to various parasites and diseases such as heartworm, ticks, hookworms, fleas, mange, etc.

Selecting a Boarding Kennel

Stop by a kennel and visit with the owner. Get acquainted with the people who will be caring for your dog. Ask questions; take nothing for granted. Are toys or bedding welcome? How will Rover be exercised? What will you feed Rover? Talk about safety features. Discuss frankly any qualms you may have about boarding. They will appreciate your frankness and interest.

The experienced personnel at an ABKA kennel are trained to recognize the warning signs of potential health problems and will contact a veterinarian if they feel it is called for. Many times it is easier for kennel personnel to detect problems than it is for the owner of the dog. A good example is blood in the urine, a warning sign that deserves attention, can more easily be detected in the kennel than at home, because the dog is exercised in a specific area which is cleaned regularly.

It is not, however, part of the kennel's job to diagnose or to prescribe. If Rover does require veterinary aid while he is in the kennel, you should be aware that you—the pet's owner—are financially responsible for such aid. Discuss, before boarding, any medication or special care Rover might need. Many kennels offer specialized play programs such as Playschool, Nature walks, etc.

During boarding it is possible that dogs might step in their stools or urine and become dirty. This can happen in the cleanest of kennels! Also, some of the finest disinfectants available for sanitizing are not always the most pleasant smelling, and the odor may cling to your dog's coat. Bathing and/or grooming may be a welcome solution. Advise the kennel owner if you want your dog to have a bath on the day he goes home.

Make certain you understand the rate structure for all services and hours of operation. The fee for boarding includes the care of your pet, as well as the peace of mind that goes with knowing that Rover is safe and with someone you can trust.

One standard of measuring the kennel owner's interest in his profession is his membership in the American Boarding Kennels Association. You can be certain ABKA members are trying to keep current on the latest developments within the industry, and that they truly care. Their membership certificate will be proudly displayed.

A Working Partnership

When you have selected your kennel, keep in mind that successful boarding is the result of the partnership between you and the kennel operator, working together for the best interest of your dog. As a responsible pet owner there are a few things you must attend to before bringing Rover in to board. Make certain all immunizations are current. Your kennel operator will be happy to discuss the kennel's immunization requirements with you. Your pet should be free of internal and external parasites and not have been exposed to any contagious diseases. Do not feed Rover for at least 4 hours prior to kenneling to minimize the possibility of stomach upset. Boarding at a kennel is the best alternative, but separation from master and/or being in strange surroundings can produce stress in your dog, and stress can result in lowered resistance to disease and sometimes even temporary changes in behavior. Be sure to inform the kennel proprietor of any special idiosyncrasies or medical problems Rover may have (history of epilepsy or fear of thunder, etc.) that may aid him in keeping Rover healthy and happy.

Dogs should be prepared psychologically for boarding. It's best, of course, to begin with a pup as soon as the immunization program is complete. (Puppies usually learn very quickly to enjoy board-

ing.) Some kennels offer “day-care” services enabling you to leave your dog for a few hours at a time. This is an excellent way to introduce your dog to boarding. After just a few visits Rover accepts a kennel as a normal way of life.

The psychological preparation of a dog for boarding—and also for helping him develop a healthy personality—also includes getting him used to new people and experiences (socialization). This is probably the most easily accomplished by taking him through obedience classes and occasionally boarding him. Naturally, a dog who is relaxed about boarding is more likely to board well. (A pet owner sometimes needs reminding that is not beneficial to lament over his dog in the kennel office upon leaving him, nor should he bring out the suitcases at home the day before the trip—both of these things cause his dog to be unnecessarily upset.)

Understanding the Kennel Environment

It is important to understand the possible effects of stress on a dog and to do everything possible to minimize stress both prior to and immediately after boarding. Sometimes temporary behavior changes can occur as a result of unfamiliar surroundings... While boarding, dear sweet Rover tears up the bed he has slept in for years. Or “Killer,” that rowdy scourge of the neighborhood, turns into a little lamb. Eating habits change under stress, and a dog assimilates his food differently. Some will eat like canaries at home and like vultures at a kennel. They may put on a few pounds. Others can lose weight though eating well or lose weight by not eating enough. Kennel life can be very exciting, and some dogs lose weight because they run the weight off as they charge around barking at other dogs and having a wonderful time. These dogs often leave the kennel exhausted but happy, and sleep a lot the first couple of days they are home.

All of the preparation by the pet owner merely points out that successful boarding depends not only upon the kennel, but also upon how well the owner prepares his dog for the experience.

Now that Rover is Home Again

When Rover is picked up he will be very excited to see you. (Dogs do not have a sense of time so he would be just as happy to see you if you left him 5 minutes or 5 days.) Do not feed him (though he will act hungry once he gets back on his familiar turf) for at least 3 hours, and then be very careful not to overfeed him. Also, excitement might cause Rover to pant a lot, and become thirsty. Give him a few ice cubes to tide him over until feeding time. Again, in his happy, excited state, excessive food and water consumption can create problems.

The vast majority of dogs view their stay at the kennel as a vacation. Relax and enjoy your trip. To learn more about the American Boarding Kennels Association and its programs, visit us on the web at www.abka.com.

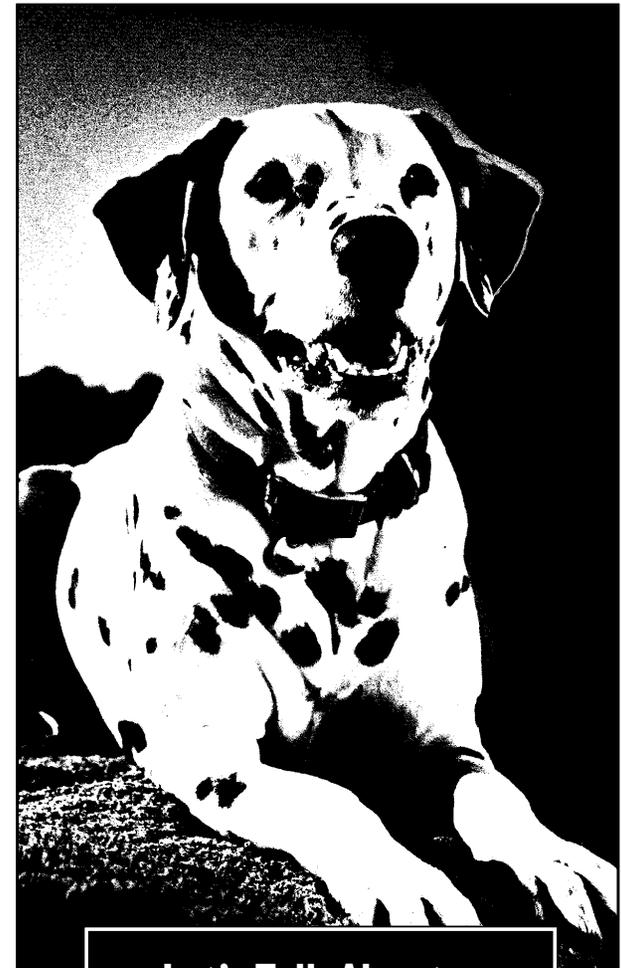


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the betterment of the pet care industry*

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Your Kennel Stamp Here

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Let's Talk About...

Boarding
**Your
Dog**