

Published July 20th, 2011

Home Alone - When You go on Vacation

By Mona Miller, DVM



Summer can be a busy time of year, as are winter holidays, during which a lot of us go away for vacation. I thought I might provide some tips on how to manage your furry, feathered or scaled friend's care while you are away.

Who should take care of your pet while you're gone? There are several options including a boarding kennel, ask a family or friend to take your pet into their home or hire a pet-sitter to come to your house. Your veterinarian will be able to provide a list of boarding facilities - some take dogs and cats, some take cats only, some cater to birds.

If your pet receives medication or requires special care, leave specific and detailed instructions regarding type of medication, dose and frequency. Make sure that you have plenty of the medication, as well as food, cat litter, hamster shavings, etc. to cover the time you'll be gone. You might want to show your pet-sitter specifically how to administer the medication if she/he is not familiar with this.

An older pet might require more care. For instance, if you have a senior large breed dog and your pet-sitter is not staying overnight, she/he might need to check on your dog three or four times during the day, to make sure that the dog has opportunity to go outside, to move around a bit and to make sure all food has been consumed.

It is a good idea to make provisions with your pet caretaker for emergency or urgent veterinary care. In a signed letter left with your pet-sitter, you should provide information such as your travel dates, your contact information, when contact may or may not be possible, your regular veterinary hospital phone number/address, and the location/phone number of the nearest veterinary emergency hospital. If you want someone other than your pet-sitter to authorize medical treatment, leave that individual's contact

information as well. It is important to also include a brief statement regarding how you would like your pet-sitter to proceed with authorizing veterinary care and handling finances if you're not immediately reachable. Example statements might read: "I authorize emergency veterinary care up to \$500" or "I authorize all life-saving measures to be taken, no matter the cost, in the event of emergency." Think of this a bit like an Advance Health Care Directive, in the sense that you have provided some guidelines for your pet-sitter and veterinarian to follow. A conversation with your veterinarian prior to your departure may help you clarify such statements, as well as alert your veterinarian as to your desires. I recommend leaving a copy of this Authorization to Treat letter with your veterinarian.

In emergencies, most veterinarians will provide life-saving measures without specific authorization from the owner. However, it is helpful to your pet and your pet-sitter to have outlined some guidelines in advance.



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her young son and two cats. She has worked at Four Seasons Animal Hospital in Lafayette since moving here in 2001. She attended Cal as an undergrad, and received her DVM from U.C. Davis. She can be reached at Four Seasons, 938-7700, or by email to MonaSDVM@aol.com.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA