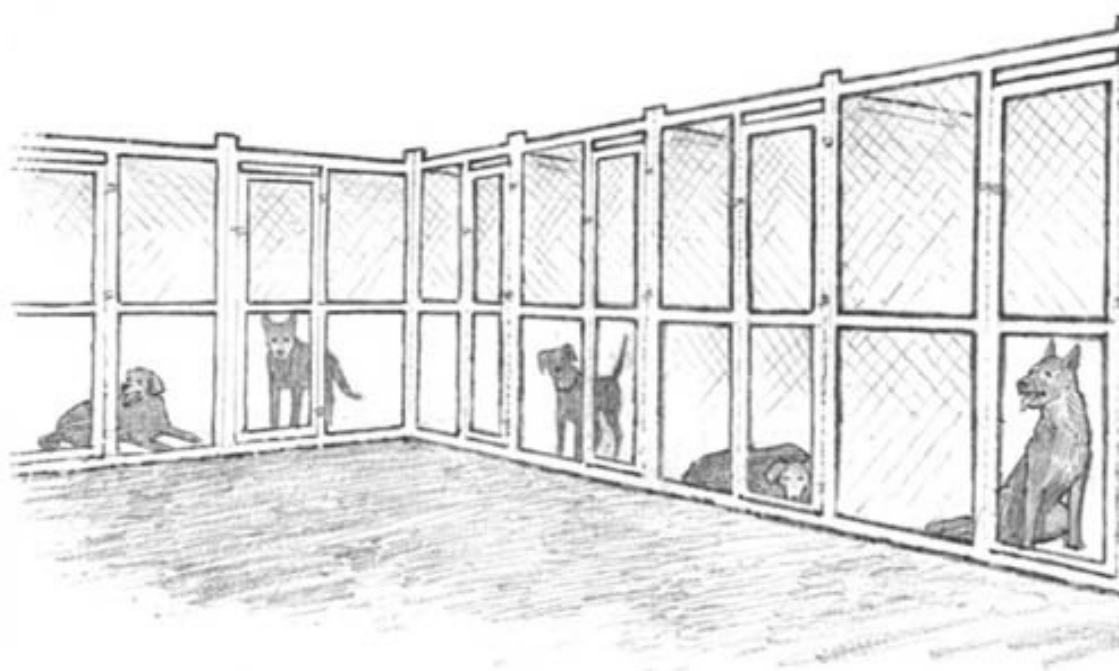


# BOARDING YOUR DOG

HOW TO MAKE  
YOUR DOG'S STAY  
HAPPY, COMFORTABLE,  
AND SAFE

PAT STORER



# **Boarding Your Dog**

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Happy, Comfortable, and Safe**

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## **Introduction**

When you decide to include a dog as part of your family, you accept the responsibility for his mental and physical well-being. This responsibility includes making arrangements for his care when you are away from home. When you leave home, you often may be able to take the dog with you, but there will be times when it is not appropriate for your pet to accompany you. Perhaps you're going on vacation or attending an out-of-town wedding or funeral. Perhaps you are moving and need someone to care for your pet while you find a suitable new home. Maybe you will be visiting someone who is allergic to dogs.

These are just a few of the thousands of foreseeable — and unforeseeable — situations that leave you wondering, “What on earth am I going to do with the dog?”

The answer is that you're going to have to board him. If you've done your homework and found a good kennel that you and your dog like, you won't ever have to feel guilty or worried about leaving your canine friend behind. Your dog will feel like he's visiting friends; you will rest secure knowing that your dog is being looked after by experienced and kind people.

Your dog's personality and temperament will be important factors in determining what type of accommodation you should choose for him. For example, if your dog loves water, you may want to board him at a kennel that offers a wading pool for playtime. If your dog becomes anxious around other dogs, he may fare better with a professional pet sitter. If your dog is hostile toward strangers, however, a neighbor or family member may be a better caretaker. This bulletin will guide you through the process of making arrangements that best meet your standards and the needs of your dog.

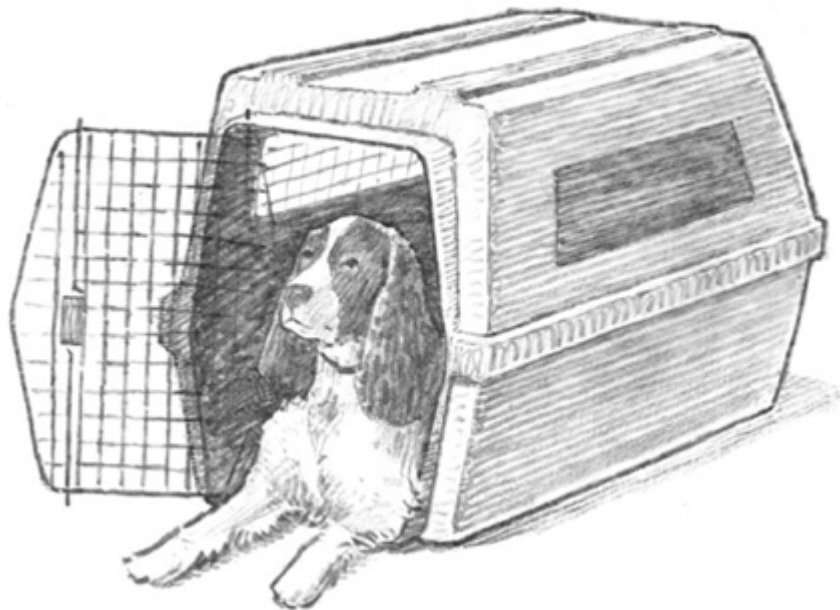
## Preparation Is Half the Battle

As the dog's owner and master, you have the power to make her time away from you a fun, trouble-free experience. Giving your dog basic training, exposing her to a variety of social situations, teaching her structured games that other humans can play with her, and preparing a thorough list of her dietary, medical, and other requirements will make your absence bearable for both the caretaker and your canine companion.

### *Crate Training*

Crate training is a method of teaching your dog to accept and enjoy being in a dog crate, where she can rest and relax in private. Crates are used by many dog owners, especially those who travel frequently. If your dog has been properly crate trained, she considers her crate her very own room. In many instances, the crate can go with her to the kennel or other boarding place; it will give her security while you are away. The crate also helps you feel more at ease when leaving your dog because you are confident that she will feel "at home," secure, and comfortable.

*A crate-trained dog feels right at home in the crate, no matter where the crate may be.*



### **For More Information**

Training your dog to accept a crate is thoroughly covered in the Storey Country Wisdom Bulletin *Crate Training Your Dog for Home and Travel*, by Pat Storer.

### ***Basic Obedience***

Dogs that have at least basic obedience training will accept the leadership of a substitute caretaker more easily than dogs that have had no training at all. Your caretaker also will find it easier to get a message across to your dog if she responds to basic commands.



*If he is trained in basic obedience, your dog will be able to adjust quickly to the leadership of substitute caretakers at the kennel.*

### ***Socialization***

Make an effort to introduce your dog to other pets, people, and places. If your dog is well socialized, he will be more comfortable with any changes that must be made because of your absence. If you are dropping off your dog at an unfamiliar kennel, he will be better able to cope and adapt if he has had frequent car trips, opportunities to play with other

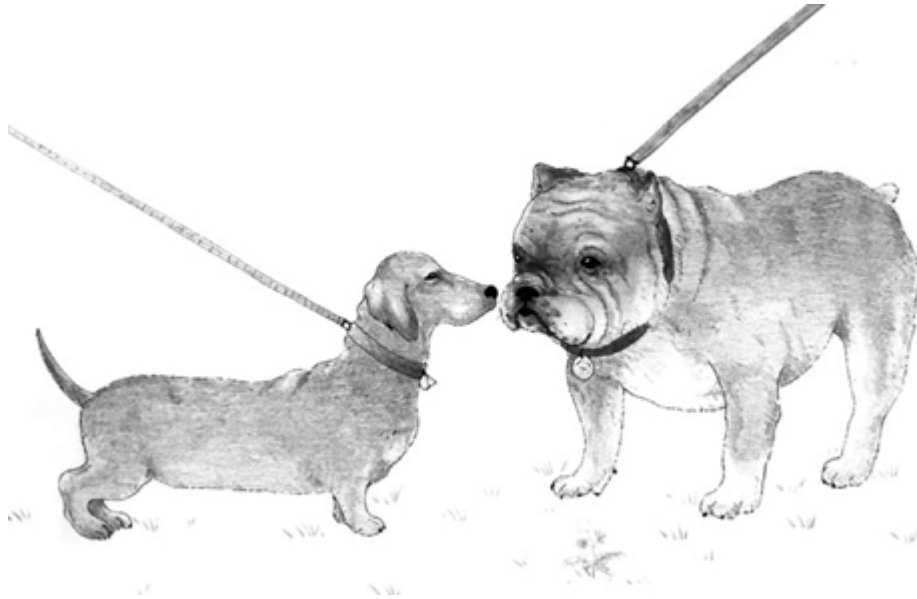
dogs in a park, visits to neighbors' and friends' homes, and so on.

### ***Structured Games***

#### **10 Words Your Dog Should Know**

1. Her name — Used to get the dog's attention, often in conjunction with other commands.
2. "Sit" — Change from a standing to a sitting position.
3. "Stay" — Remain there, usually 1 or 2 minutes.
4. "Heel" — Walk beside me.
5. "Okay" — Permission to act, such as pass through a door or take a treat.
6. "No" — Stop what you are doing (or thinking about doing).
7. "Kennel" — Go into your crate, kennel, or the car.
8. "Come" — Come to me.
9. "Down" — Change from a sitting to a lying-down position.
10. "Stop" — Stop what you are doing and stay where you are. This command is particularly helpful if the dog is in danger.

*If your dog is well socialized, he's less likely to be upset by the presence of other dogs at the kennel.*



Teach your dog games of fetch, Frisbee, hide-and-seek, and so on. Your dog's caretaker will find bonding with your pet much easier if the dog enjoys playing structured games. Tell the caretaker which pastimes are your dog's favorites, and indicate dos and don'ts. For example, if your dog is aggressive toward other dogs, ask the caretaker to keep the games one-on-one, and not to share the fun with other dogs.

### ***Information Sheet***

Keep on hand a sheet with all pertinent information about your dog. This list will help the caretaker with your pet's everyday needs as well as in an emergency. The list should include:

- Your dog's name, age, and sex
- Whether the dog is spayed or neutered
- His normal feeding schedule
- What type of food he eats and how much
- His medication requirements
- His current flea- and parasite-control program
- His current immunizations
- Obedience commands and other words he understands
- His treat preferences



- Favorite games and toys
- Your veterinarian's name and phone number
- Your name and phone number(s)
- Any other pertinent information, such as "gets cold or hot easily," "is very active," "aggressive with certain other dogs," and so on.

## **Choosing the Right Boarding Option**

You can choose from several options when it comes to pet care while you are away. The type of accommodations you select for your dog will depend on a combination of factors, including:

- Your dog's personality, level of obedience training, and special needs
- The willingness of friends or family to care for the dog in your absence
- Commercial services available in your area
- Your budget
- The length of your absence

### ***Boarding with a Friend or Family Member***

You may have a friend or family member who is willing to take care of your pet at his or her home. This arrangement may be a good choice if the person and dog like each other and the sitter's home is compatible with your pet's needs.

If the sitter already has pets, are they compatible with your dog? Taking your dog to a household where there are cats, for example, might not be a good idea if your dog has not been around cats before or has previously demonstrated problematic behavior with cats. Think carefully before allowing your dog to stay where other dogs are not spayed or neutered. Also consider size and temperament conflicts.

Make sure that the sitter's home and yard will not pose problems for your dog. Does the person have exercise and potty facilities that will promote an easy transition? Check the time it will take your dog to reach the potty area as well as the ease of maneuvering past obstacles to reach it. Are the home and yard dog-proof and safe for *your* dog? Your dog will investigate the new surroundings and may find a poisonous plant in the flower bed; a cupboard he can open containing

household chemicals; an opening under the fence; access to the garage, where antifreeze may have dripped on the floor; or other dangerous things.

Look everything over carefully yourself, from your dog's perspective. Then take your dog for a daytime and overnight visit to see how the facilities and personalities of the resident people and pets work with your dog.

### ***Boarding at a Veterinary Clinic***

Veterinary clinics often offer boarding facilities. A great advantage of boarding your dog at a vet's office is that if your dog becomes ill or is injured while you are gone, he will have medical care available on the spot. However, don't make the mistake of thinking that just because a kennel is hosted by a veterinarian's office, it's the right kennel for your dog. Give the boarding facilities the same careful scrutiny you would give a commercial kennel (see [Visiting a Boarding Kennel, page 10](#), for advice). Check out the size and type of enclosure the clinic uses; it may be smaller than a regular boarding kennel.

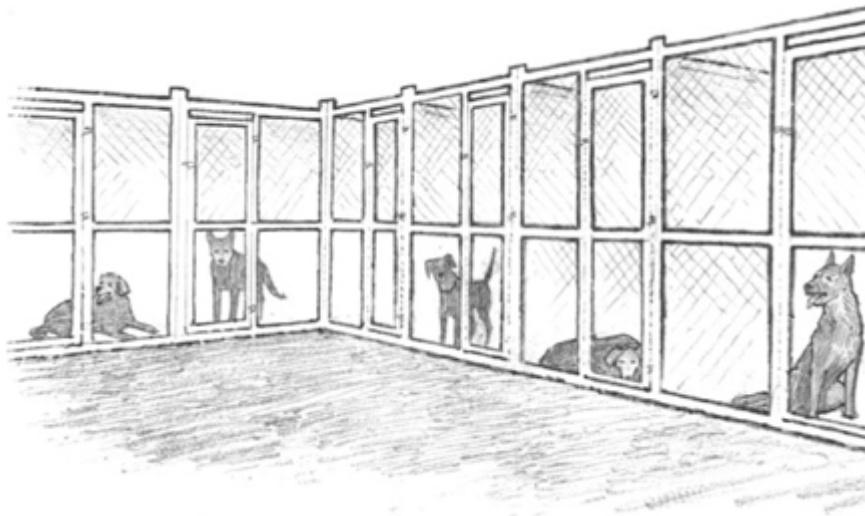
### ***Commercial Boarding Kennels***

In most areas you'll find a wide variety of commercial boarding kennels from which to choose. Some boarding kennels are very basic, while others are plush and elaborate with many lavish amenities — and prices to match.

The basic commercial boarding kennel specializes in boarding dogs (and sometimes other animals) for stays ranging from a few hours to several weeks or months. In general, each dog at a kennel has an small indoor space and access to a private outdoor pen. (Because of zoning restrictions, including noise control, boarding kennels in urban areas often have their complete facility housed inside a building.) Depending on the individual kennel and geographical location, the inside section may or may not be heated or air conditioned.

Recreational activities provided vary from facility to facility. Some kennels offer wading pools as part of the

communal play period. If your dog loves water, she'll surely have a fun time splashing in and out of the pool with other dogs. Some kennels offer a doggie playground consisting of ramps, tunnels, sand, and various perches and toys. Larger kennels have several play areas where a few compatible dogs can be let out at the same time to exercise in each area. Dogs are grouped by size, temperament, and personality, and they are — or should be — carefully monitored. Male dogs that are not neutered must be exercised separately and will command an additional cost for this service.



*A commercial boarding kennel will house many dogs at once. Each dog should have its own private indoor area with access to a recreation area and a potty area.*

### ***Specialty Boarding Kennels***

#### **Finding an Accredited Boarding Kennel**

You can obtain a list of boarding kennels in your area from the American Boarding Kennels Association (ABKA). The ABKA has a Code of Ethical Conduct that must be sworn to by its members. Only boarding kennels that meet the code of ethics and have facilities in accordance with ABKA standards may be members. They are issued the accreditation from the ABKA once they pass an on-site inspection.

You may check to see whether a particular kennel is accredited with ABKA by calling (719) 591-1113 or visiting [www.abka.com](http://www.abka.com). Also check with your veterinarian or a local animal shelter for recommendations.

Specialty kennels are more luxurious than the average commercial boarding kennels. They have a variety of optional amenities, activities, and accommodations. Such kennels may offer general boarding accommodations as well as pet “suites” complete with large rooms, themed decor, a television, special beds, couches, and even “valets.” Some of these kennels may even offer a compatible canine roommate for your dog at your request.

These luxury kennels offer many canine-pleasing activities, such as a special “happy hour” in which pets are treated to extraspecial attention, treats, and games.

## Visiting a Boarding Kennel

Once you have found a boarding kennel, call to find out more about its facilities, policies, and services. For example, do they have set hours for arrivals and departures? Do you need a reservation and, if so, how far in advance? (This question is particularly critical if your dog's stay will be over a holiday.)

Make an appointment to visit the kennel, if visitors are allowed. Some kennels do not permit visitors to enter the facilities because residing dogs may not react favorably to strangers. Also, since most visitors have dogs of their own, it is possible for visitors to unintentionally introduce communicable diseases to the resident dogs. Since the kennel's prime concern is the welfare of its canine charges, a "no visitors" policy may actually be best for your dog.

If the kennel's policies prohibit you from actually entering the kennel area, ask if you can view it from a place that is acceptable to the owners and you. Kennels that have a "no visitors" policy should offer an area that looks out onto the kennel so potential customers can view the facilities without being a potential health hazard or upsetting the boarders. If the kennel will not let you view its boarding facilities, think twice before leaving your dog there!

### *Quietly Observe*

Trust your eyes, nose, and instincts when visiting a kennel. The following five-point checklist will help you sort out your observations and make a good analysis.

**1. The staff.** From the moment you first walk in the front door of the office, examine the staff, their attitude toward their work, and their attitude toward you. Note how the staff members greet you and address your concerns. If they are not courteous, professional, and considerate of your feelings, you can't expect them to treat your dog any better.

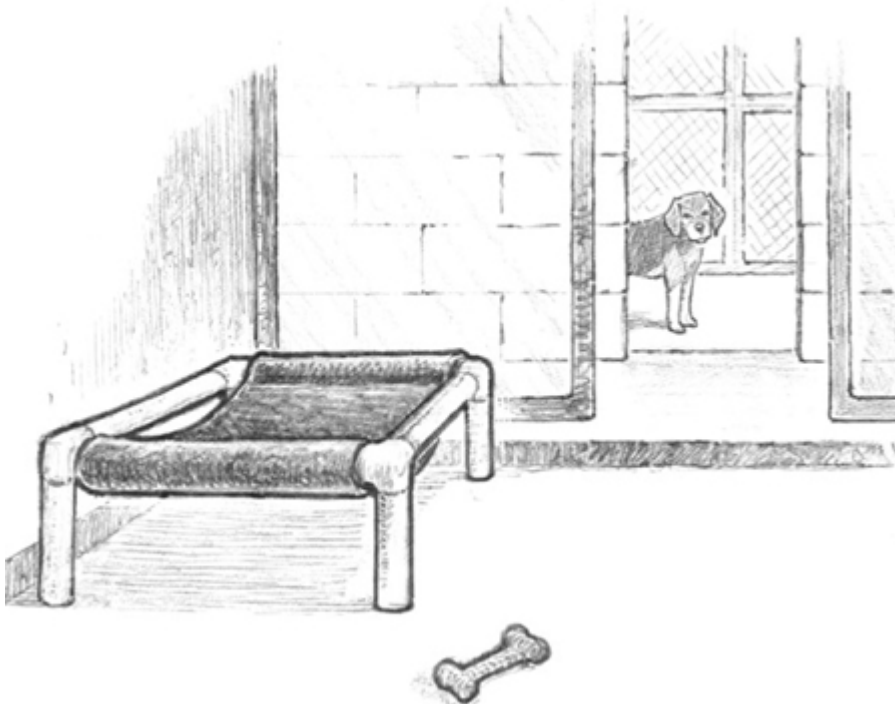
**2. The security.** Does the facility have secure fencing, gates, locks, and so on? Do the kennels have tops or fencing that

dogs can't climb? Does the flooring provide good traction but prevent digging? Are the cage latches dog-proof? Are there security cameras?

Also examine the kennel security from the perspective of emergencies. Are there fire and smoke detectors? Are the pens raised a few inches off the ground to keep the dogs above the water in the event of a minor flood? Is there more than one exit from every pen?

**3. The pens.** Your dog will spend most of her time at the kennel in her pen, so it's important to be sure that the pens are clean and comfortable. Note how the kennel and its pens look and smell. Odors can be masked to some degree with deodorants, but as a general rule, a well-run kennel will not have the same aroma as one with poor sanitation. What size are the pens? Are there different sizes available?

Are there solid partitions between boarders indoors? Are outside partitions constructed to prevent fighting? Do the dogs have an exercise area? Some kennels have individual runs that allow for adequate exercise of each dog. Other kennels allow several dogs access to a communal exercise area where they can interact and play with each other.



*Every dog should have access to a private indoor sleeping area, which should contain a sleeping mat. If the kennel doesn't offer sleeping mats, you should be allowed to bring one from home.*

**4. The accommodations.** Once you've made note of the size, security, and construction of the pens, take a look at the accommodations the kennel provides for each penned dog. Does each dog have individual access to drinking water? Each dog should have a private container — preferably made of stainless steel — of fresh, clean water.

What does the kennel provide for your dog's sleeping area? Is there an indoor area where he can rest? Can he access an outdoor potty area directly from his sleeping area? Is there any sort of a sleeping platform in the indoor area? (If there isn't a sleeping platform, ask whether you are allowed to bring one for your dog.)

Do the outdoor areas have adequate protection from heat, cold, and precipitation? If the kennel is in a warm geographical area, are misters provided in outside areas?

If you hear music playing in the background, consider it a bonus. Not only is music soothing to dogs, but it also helps to muffle kennel noises such as barking and whining.

**5. The dogs in residence.** Do the dogs in the kennel at the time of your visit seem to be relatively quiet and happy? If any staff members are around, watch their interactions with the dogs carefully. Do the dogs seem happy to see them?

### **Know Your Dog's Special Needs**

Certain breeds need additional protection from sunlight, heat, and cold. Heavy-coated breeds and those with short muzzles can have overheating and respiratory problems quickly. Dogs with short hair and low body fat can chill rapidly and sunburn easily.

If your dog has a physical condition that requires careful monitoring of exercise, it might be better to choose a kennel that has a private run and personalized care. If your dog is overweight, he will need special consideration to



avoid overheating during periods of hot weather, exercise, and excitement. Geriatric or overweight dogs can suffer from heatstroke in a few minutes in seemingly normal temperature conditions if not carefully monitored.

### **Quick Tip**

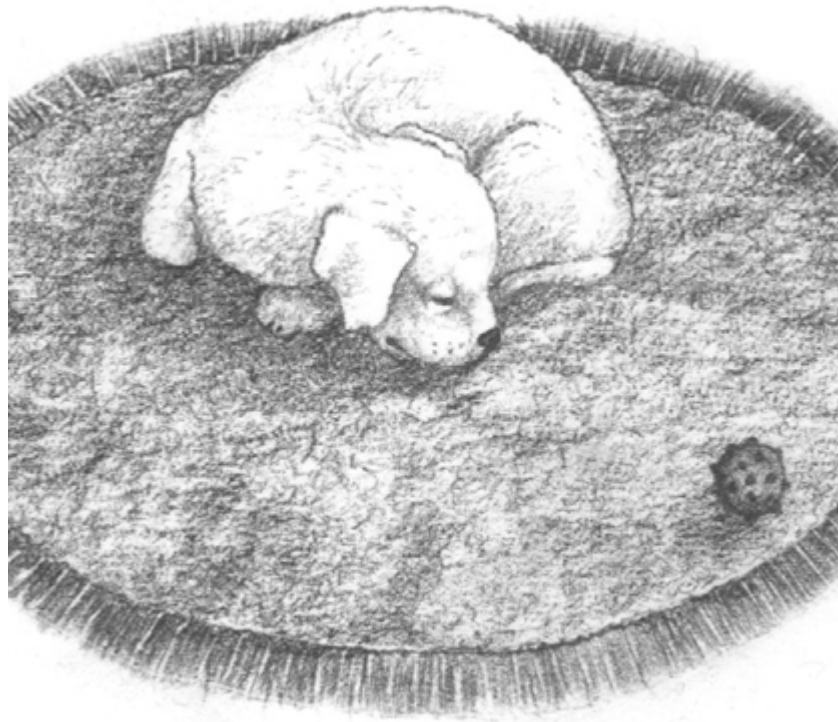
Your dog's safety is of utmost importance. Before bringing your dog to a kennel, check with the local animal rescue and humane organizations to see whether there have been any bad reports about or violations by the kennel.

### ***Ask Questions***

The staff of a quality facility should be eager to answer your questions and address your concerns. Here are some informed questions to ask before you make your dog a resident:

- Does the kennel have a license and ABKA certification? Both of these items should be proudly posted in the reception area. If they aren't, find out why.
- What are the regular hours for drop-off and pickup? Be sure to find out whether the kennel is closed during certain hours, days, or holidays. What will happen if you have an emergency and will be late or can arrive only during "off hours"?
- How many exercise periods will your dog be allowed each day? If dogs are exercised together, how does the kennel test the dogs for compatibility? Is there an extra charge for the exercise periods? (Exercise is essential for your dog's mental well-being. If the dog does not get playtime out of the kennel, he may develop stress-related anxiety; stomach upsets, diarrhea, and behavior problems may result.)
- Are there extra services like playtime with other dogs, grooming, and so on? If so, what is the charge for these services?

- Is special care taken with first-time boarders to ensure a positive experience? If you want your dog to look forward to visits to the kennel, it's important that he receives some extra love and attention during his trial visits and first long-term stay.
- What is the kennel's parasite control program? Get a copy of this before you take your dog for a stay, and give it to your veterinarian to look over. You don't want your dog to be exposed to chemicals that could make him sick.
- Does the kennel have a "special care" area for dogs that need extra attention? For example, are geriatric dogs taken for slow walks and allowed out only with other dogs that will not aggravate a physical condition such as arthritis? Is there an extra charge for females that are in heat?
- Can you bring your dog's own crate, bedding, toys, and treats? If so, will the staff sanitize them on the day you pick up the dog? If not, plan to have a spare crate ready at home so you can thoroughly sanitize the returning crate and bedding as well as the dog.
- Will the kennel wash and sanitize your dog's bedding in the event of stress-related diarrhea or vomiting?
- Are dogs let out for potty breaks, or are they expected to "go" in their runs? This latter arrangement may not be a good choice for a fastidious dog that might feel the "kennel" is not the proper place to urinate and defecate. The dog might hold urine or feces until it is uncomfortable.



*Having a sleeping mat that he uses at home with him at the kennel may help your dog feel more relaxed and secure.*

- Is the kennel willing to give your dog medication if it is required? Can it accept a dog with highly specific medication needs? Your dog may not be taking medication now, but you should make sure that the kennel can accommodate any future medication needs.
- Do they have an on-call veterinarian? Get the veterinarian's name and phone number. Ask the vet and other local vets for their thoughts about the kennel.
- Is the kennel willing to use your own veterinarian if your dog becomes sick or injured? If so, give the kennel your vet's contact information and give your vet the dates of your departure and return as well as the name, address, and phone number of the kennel where your dog will be staying.
- Does the kennel have guidelines regarding the health of an incoming dog? Strict rules in this area will benefit your dog.
- What is the brand and variety of dog food the kennel uses? Some kennels allow you to bring your own food,

often at an additional cost to you per meal. Some kennels cook specifically for your dog if she is a finicky eater or on a special diet. This service is also an additional cost.

### **Health Risks of Kennels**

Canine diseases and parasites can be spread by sneezing, coughing, or contact with an infected dog's saliva, urine, or feces. Some parasites can actually travel from one dog to another without physical contact between the dogs. Most kennels require current vaccinations for rabies, distemper, parvo, and bordatella. They also require proof from a veterinarian that the dog has recently been treated or checked for internal and external parasites.

Kennels will do an examination of a dog upon arrival for obvious health problems and external parasites (such as fleas, ticks, and ear mites). If your dog has any external parasites, most kennels will either not accept him or will treat him and charge you accordingly.

Even if all dogs boarded in a kennel have followed the strict health requirements, your dog may still contract a communicable illness from another dog. It is highly possible that even a dog that is properly vaccinated may be a carrier of a disease and show no outward signs. Discuss these issues with your veterinarian when you get a preboarding checkup.

- Is there constant supervision at the kennel? Are the pets checked several times a day to ensure that they haven't had any changes in health or condition? Does the staff monitor and keep a chart on each dog's behavior, elimination, and eating habits? Is the kennel help aware of the subtle signs that can indicate a dog is ill or stressed?
- Can more than one dog from your household be kept in one pen? If you have more than one dog and they enjoy each other's company, you may ask that they be boarded

in the same pen. They'll entertain each other and keep each other on an even emotional keel.

- Do they have clients whom you can contact as references? Be sure to check these references. Ask them how their dogs enjoy their kennel stays and whether they've ever experienced any problems with the kennel.

### ***Evaluate the Kennel's Contract***

#### **Keep Your Dog's Diet Consistent**

Changing your dog's food abruptly may cause digestive problems such as diarrhea. If a kennel will not allow you to bring food for your dog, try to gradually switch your dog over to the kennel's brand during a two-week period prior to boarding him.

*Your dog may prefer not only his own food but also his own food and water dishes. Check with the kennel to find out if you can leave these items for your dog.*



#### **A Typical Day at the Kennel**

Most kennels have a daily schedule for feeding, exercising, administering medications, and checking each dog. Ask the kennel for a copy of its daily routine, and see whether it is compatible with your dog's current schedule at home.

Remember that your dog is a creature of habit and likes structure in his life. If his regular schedule is disrupted to a

great degree, you may have to deal with house soiling or other behavior problems upon your return.

Here is an example of a kennel's daily routine:

6:30 AM	Morning wake-up call. May include bringing each dog to the potty area if they don't have full-time access to it. The staff may also make the rounds for a check on the welfare of each dog.
7:30 AM	Food is served and morning medication is administered, if applicable. If water dishes are running low, they'll be refilled.
8:30 AM	Dogs are let into the exercise area or are walked. While dogs are in the exercise area or on a walk, the kennel area is washed and disinfected, and dishes are cleaned and refilled with fresh water.
9:30 AM	Dogs rest in the kennel.
2:00 PM	Dogs are let into the exercise area or are walked. Water dishes are checked; if they're running low, they're refilled.
3:00 PM	Dogs rest in the kennel.
6:00 PM	The evening meal is served and medications are administered, if applicable. Water dishes are checked again.
9:00 PM	The staff makes evening rounds, checking in on each dog and dispensing a treat to each before bedtime.

Ask for a copy of the boarding contract, which spells out the responsibilities of the kennel and your rights as the dog's owner.

A boarding contract should include the following items:

- Beginning and ending date of the contract
- Check-in time and projected check-out time
- Boarding rate per day or total rate for stay, and charges for partial days
- Provision for veterinary care
- Limits of the kennel's liability — read this section carefully!
- Your responsibility for payment as owner
- Certification that you are the actual owner of the dog
- Kennel's responsibility for feeding and care of the animal
- Size or description of the dog's quarters
- List of amenities agreed upon in advance and costs
- List of what *potential* extra costs could include
- Notice that the kennel has received a copy of your dog's health and immunization report and vet contact information
- Acknowledgment of the receipt of your dog's personal items

This list is not exhaustive, of course, and every kennel has its own wording and guidelines. After your visit, bring the contract home with you and read it carefully. Be sure to question the kennel manager about any items that you don't understand or don't agree with.

## Special Services for Special Dogs

Some kennels offer extra amenities to thoroughly pamper your pet during her stay. Ask your kennel whether grooming, food treats, and other luxury services are included in the cost of boarding.

**Beauty treatments.** At your request, a kennel may offer grooming as an optional service during your dog's stay. Some kennels will bathe each boarder before the dog leaves, depending on the length of her stay. Some kennels offer the final bathing as a free bonus, but most kennels charge for grooming at other times. The charges for grooming will vary greatly depending on the actual services performed (bathing, hair trimming, nail clipping, flea dipping, and so on), the dog's size, length and condition of the haircoat, and the detail of the trimming.

**Extra-attention sessions.** Some kennels offer packages that include brushing, treats, and play periods for one price, while other kennels offer individual time spent with your pet by a kennel attendant. This time can include your dog's favorite game, a leashed walk, or an affection session of hugs and petting. The time period for the special session is usually 10 to 15 minutes long, and fees start at about \$2.50 per session. If you take two or more dogs that are compatible with each other, ask if the kennel has a reduced rate for sessions including more than one dog.





*Some kennels offer special grooming services. Not only will you get back a clean and well-groomed dog, but your dog may love receiving the extra attention the kennel staff gives him.*

Some facilities offer leashed walks outside of the kennel. Think wisely before selecting this option, because your dog will be off the kennel's secured property. Also, be sure you thoroughly understand the kennel's liability in the event of an accident that occurs off its grounds. Do not select this option if your dog is not completely obedient when on a leash.

**Training sessions.** Some kennels offer obedience training and behavior modification in addition to boarding services. You may wish to consider one of these services while your dog is being boarded, especially if your pet has behavioral problems. Types of training, time frames, and costs vary among kennels.

**Day care programs.** Some kennels allow drop-off and pickup on the same day. This service can be useful if you need

a place for your dog to be safe and comfortable for just a few hours, especially if your dog is convalescing or geriatric and needs special care during the day. Boarding kennels have specific hours for accepting and releasing dogs, so be sure the times fit into your schedule. Ask about a contingency plan if you will be late.

**Pickup and delivery service.** Some kennels offer to drop off and pick up your dog to and from your home or the airport. This service is helpful if you are on a tight time schedule or are without transportation suitable for your dog.

**Internet Web cam.** With the advent of on-line, live camera sites, a few innovative kennels now offer live footage to interested owners (at a price to match the extravagance of the service). Owners can click on a link to view their dogs' living quarters at the kennel.

## **Bringing Your Dog for a Trial Stay**

If the kennel passes your initial inspection, make a trial one-day appointment for your dog in the near future. At this early stage you won't be asking for overnight accommodations. Your dog will adjust to your absence and the kennel atmosphere more easily if you introduce him to the kennel slowly, rather than simply dumping him off at a strange place for an extended stay.

### ***Schedule a Preboarding Checkup***

Take your dog to your veterinarian for a complete checkup before his kennel stay. Give your vet a copy of the kennel's entry requirements. Your vet will check your dog's heart and respiratory functions, look into his ears for mites and infections, bring immunizations up to date, and do tests for heartworms and internal parasites. Ask the vet to check the dog's weight and note it on his office record. Get the copies of the vet's reports for the kennel.



*Before bringing your dog to a kennel, you must have him thoroughly examined by a veterinarian. Be sure to bring along a copy of the kennel's health-certification requirements.*

### **Preboarding Beauty Treatment**

A day or two before your dog's kennel trial, treat her to a full grooming, complete with a bath, hair trim (if necessary), brushing, and nail clipping. Your dog will appreciate the extra attention.

### ***Dropping Off Your Dog***

Arrive at the kennel during the drop-off period. Bring with you the items allowed by the kennel that are appropriate for a one-day stay, such as your dog's crate, a sleeping mat, and one or two of her favorite toys. Give your dog's information sheet (see [page 6](#) for a list of what to include) and any vet reports to the kennel staff. Let them know what time you will pick up the

dog. Ask the staff to keep notes on your dog's attitude and reactions while she is in their care.

When you arrive, some kennels will ask you to take the dog to the kennel run in which she will be staying, but most kennels will have a member of the staff take the dog from you.

An important thing to remember is that this trial stay is intended to accustom your dog to being away from home and you. This is not a time to lavish love and affection on the dog. Instead, send her off as if she is going to have lots of fun. If you are warm but firm, if you display confidence that this is the absolute best thing for your dog — no matter how much worry or guilt you may be feeling — your dog will believe you. If you feel anxious, your dog will feel anxious too. So say good-bye with good cheer, give your dog a quick pat on the head, and confidently leave the kennel without looking back.

### **Label Your Dog's Items**

Put your dog's name and your name and phone number on all of her personal items you wish returned to you. Keep a list of what you take with you to the kennel. If you take treats and food, label each bag or box. Use waterproof indelible ink markers. If the item is metal, label it with an inscriber.

### ***Picking Up Your Dog***

When the time has come to pick up your dog, arrive within the allowed time period. Pay your bill before your dog is brought out into the waiting area. Ask for the staff's comments about your dog's reactions and attitude.

When your dog is brought out to you, do not give her an emotional welcome. An emotional outburst would only encourage your dog to think that this kennel idea is a big, heartbreaking ordeal to be gotten over with as quickly as possible — not something to look forward to and enjoy. Note your dog's attitude, but do not act upon it. If she is crying, whimpering, or jumping, ignore the behavior and speak to her with a few calm words. Take her leash in the same matter-of-

fact manner in which you left her, no matter how much you missed her.

When you get home, settle your dog into her normal routine, which may include a play session or a calming walk. To be sure her stomach is settled from all the excitement of the day's experiences, your reunion, and the drive home, don't feed her for an hour or two after leaving the kennel. Offer her a small amount of water; if she drinks it all, give her another small amount. You don't want to deprive her of water if she's thirsty, but if she's a bit stressed from her day, she may nervously gulp down huge quantities of water, which can lead to vomiting.

In a few days check your dog's memory and attitude by driving by the kennel with her. If she enjoyed her stay there, she may become excited when you drive by. She'll remember the fun she had playing with the other dogs and the attention she received from the staff. She definitely should not growl, whimper, or try to hide when she sees the kennel.



*Don't lavish attention on your dog when you pick her up, even if she's overjoyed to see you. Pet her warmly but sparingly, speak calmly, and take her leash matter-of-factly to bring her home.*

### ***Schedule an Overnight Stay***

With the one-day stay satisfactorily under both of your belts, you and your dog are ready for a slightly longer visit to the kennel. Make an appointment for an overnight stay.

The routine for an overnight visit is much like that of a day visit. Take all the comfort items that the kennel will allow you to bring. Tell the kennel staff what time you will pick up your dog. Be sure that they have the correct contact information for you and your veterinarian in the event of a crisis. Then bid a cheerful good-bye to your dog and walk straight out the door.

When you return to pick up your dog, once again be brave and greet him matter-of-factly. Remember that even though you missed your dog tremendously, the overnight lesson is very important. He must become accustomed to being away from you from time to time, and he should feel confident that he will be well cared for during that time period. If you are not anxious, he won't be either.

When you return home, settle into the normal routine with a light exercise session or brisk walk. Give the dog's stomach a couple of hours to settle down before you feed him.



## Preparing for a Long Stay

It's important to take the proper steps to verify the security and competency of a kennel and to acclimate your dog to the kennel environment by taking her there for trial stays.

Knowing that your dog enjoys being there, that the kennel will do a good job of caring for her, and that she will be returned to you in good health and high spirits upon your return helps put your mind at ease when you must board your dog for an extended stay.

When you're boarding your dog for an extended period, it's important to supply her with enough "comfort" items to keep her healthy and happy during her time away from you.

Kennels have specific guidelines concerning the personal items you may bring with your dog. Some kennels ask you to bring one of the dog's personal blankets or toys but nothing that is valuable. Whenever possible, ask if you can bring the following items:

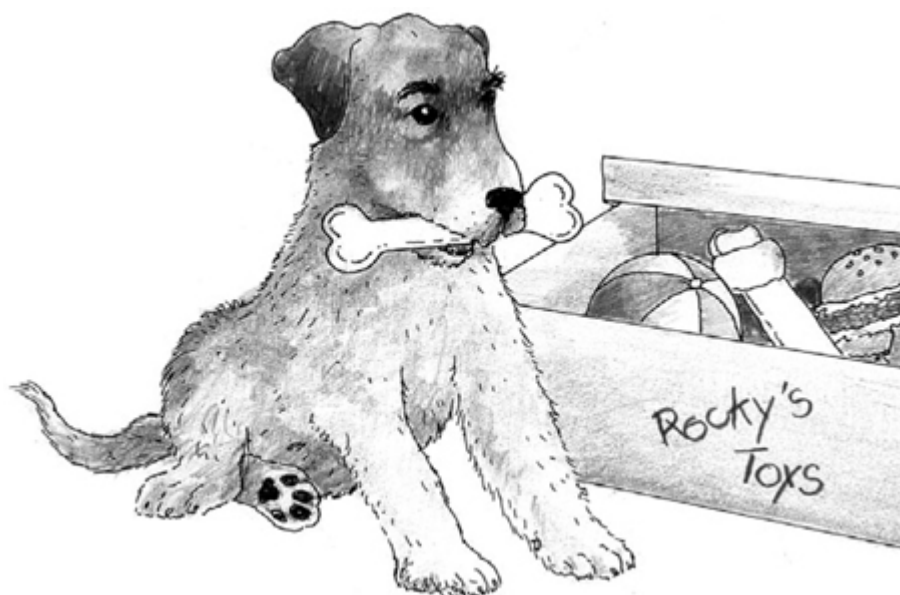
### Quick Tip

If it's been several months since your dog last stayed at the kennel and you now need to board her for an extended period, you may want to refresh her memory by taking her for another one-day or overnight stay.

- **Your dog's crate**, if she is crate trained and spends a lot of time resting in the crate. If the kennel will not allow the crate, make sure that your dog will have a comfortable resting platform in her pen.
- **Bedding** — her crate pad, blankets, or mats. Be sure that they are washable, and find out whether the kennel will wash them before you pick up your dog. If not, take plastic bags to put them in when you pick up your dog, and wash and sanitize them at home.
- **An old T-shirt you have worn but not washed.** Your odor on the shirt may be comforting to your dog. If you

will be gone more than a few days, take a couple of extra worn shirts so that the kennel staff can give them to your dog several days apart.

- **Dog food**, if the kennel uses a different brand of food than what your dog is used to eating and you don't want to change your dog's diet. Don't expect to get a discount for furnishing the food — it's an extra step for the kennel to make the substitution. Some kennels even charge extra for the service. If your dog is finicky and will eat only certain foods that are home cooked or hand prepared, ask the kennel if you may fix the meals ahead of time and freeze them. Give your dog a test run on the precooked, frozen and thawed food a week or so before she is taken to the kennel to be sure she will eat food prepared and served this way.
- **Food and water dishes**. Most kennels prefer to use their own utensils, but if your dog is particularly snooty about what she eats and drinks from, the kennel will be willing to accommodate her.
- **Water from home**, if your dog is sensitive to a change in water.
- **Medication and/or parasite prevention program**— take enough for the time you are gone *plus* enough for several extra days in case you're delayed. Put your dog's name and your veterinarian's contact info on each bottle.
- **Favorite toys**. Don't overload your dog with toys. He'll want a few of his favorites, but he'll probably be so busy watching and interacting with other dogs that he won't have much time to play with the toys.
- **Favorite chew items**. Also bring written instructions on when to give the chew items.
- **Collar and leash**. The kennel may ask you to remove them, however, in favor of its own equipment.



*Pull only a few of your dog's favorite toys and chew items from his toybox. He'll be so busy watching and interacting with other dogs that he won't have much time for them.*

### ***Readjusting to Life at Home***

Dogs are very resilient and will easily settle back into their schedule at home, even if they have had an extended stay at a kennel. Although you are probably feeling a little guilty for leaving him behind while you were gone, try not to be too emotional or fussy when you bring your dog home. The no-feeding rule that must be enforced after a trial visit also holds true for a dog returning home from an extended visit: Don't feed the dog for a few hours after his return to help him calm down. Offer water, but don't allow him to drink large quantities.

Weigh your dog to see how he fared while you were gone. You probably have a report from the kennel that shows whether he ate, eliminated, and played normally. His weight should be reasonably similar to when you left. Don't be worried if there is a slight deviation — he may have rested more or exercised more than does when he is at home.

Check your dog for fleas, ticks, injuries, hair loss, and so on. He may have rested on concrete a large portion of the time, so check his elbows and hocks for abnormal bare spots or

sores. When you take him out for a potty break, check whether his bowel movement is normal.

If your dog is acting anything other than happy and healthy, call your veterinarian and discuss your concerns. Take your dog to the vet within two weeks of his extended kennel stay for an examination that includes a parasite check. In the meantime, watch for diarrhea, constipation, lethargy, abnormal temperature, or depression.

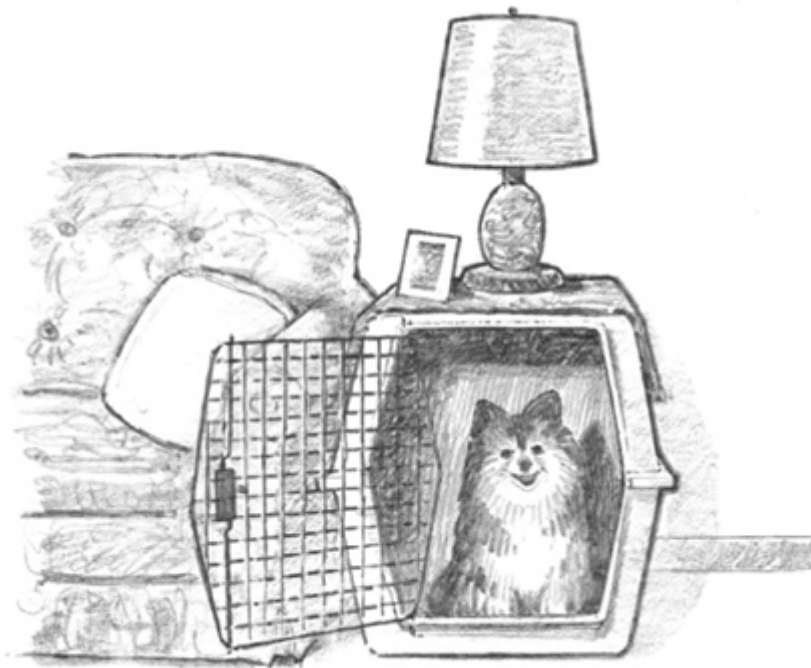
Your dog cannot talk to you and tell you about his time “at camp.” His excitement at seeing you does not mean that he had a bad time while he was at the kennel. To gauge his feelings toward the kennel, you can take him on a drive past the facilities. Watch his demeanor. Does he wag his tail, get excited, and bark? Or does he slink down and try to hide? If you have done your preboarding homework well, you will find that your dog, like most dogs, had such a good time that he gets excited when he comes in the vicinity of the kennel. A few tail wags and a doggie smile are worth a thousand words.

## **Alternatives to Boarding**

There are two alternatives to boarding your dog: arranging for in-home care or taking your dog with you on your travels. Both have a unique set of benefits and drawbacks.

### ***In-Home Dog Sitting***

You may be fortunate enough to have a family member or friend who already knows your dog and will be able to care for her while you are gone. You may also be able to find professional pet-sitting and house-sitting services in your area. For this type of service, the temporary caretaker either lives in your house while you are gone or makes several trips each day to your house to feed, exercise, and play with your dog. In-home care works well for dogs that are most comfortable in their own familiar surroundings.



*If your dog becomes highly anxious when away from home, he may do best with in-home care.*

### ***Interview Questions for Pet Sitters***

Here are some questions to ask potential pet sitters. Of course, the questions you ask will be determined in part by the person you're asking to watch your pets. If it's a teenager from your neighborhood, focus in on responsibility and their ability to react to an emergency. If you're talking with a professional pet sitter, ask for — and check — references and ask to see a written contract.

- “What is your previous experience with dogs and pet sitting?” Ask for references and check them out.
- “Do you have dogs of your own? Do you really *like* dogs?” Watch his or her attitude toward your dog and vice versa.
- “Will you be looking after dogs that belong to other people at the same time you are caring for my dog?” If this is the case, ask for immunization and deworming reports on other dogs with whom the sitter will have contact. Provide the same reports for your dog.
- “What hours are you available to take care of my pet? Will you be able to follow my schedule for feeding, exercising, and playing with the dog?”
- “Are you familiar with basic canine first-aid? Do you know what to do if there is an accidental injury, diarrhea, choking, and so on?”
- “Do you have your own vehicle? In the event of an emergency, will you be able to transport the dog to the veterinarian?”
- “Are you willing to visit once or twice before I leave to become acquainted with the dog?”
- “Are you willing to follow a detailed obedience protocol for the dog?” Familiarize the sitter with commands and signals, the dog's potty area, the daily routine, and so on. Ask the sitter to visit beforehand and go through a couple of practice sessions.
- “Can you give me a list of your fees in detail?” Be sure to ask about any extra charges that might be incurred,

such as if, in the event of an emergency, the sitter must take your pet to the veterinarian.

### ***Traveling with Your Dog***

The most common methods of travel are by car or by plane. In either case, if you want to bring your dog with you, you'll both be most comfortable if the dog is crate trained.

When you take your dog with you in the car, a crate is a safe method of confining her, since she could interfere with your driving. The crate also allows you to open the windows for ventilation without your dog jumping out or interfering with passersby if you need to leave the parked car for a moment. (Be sure to park in the shade, of course.)

Airlines will accept only dogs that are crated. However, you must follow strict regulations about the type and size of crate you use. Some airlines do not allow animals on their planes at all, some allow pets in the cargo section, and some allow pets in special crates that fit under the seats in the passenger cabin. Check with airlines well in advance, particularly in winter and summer months, about reserving a place for your dog.

If you take your dog on a vacation, you will find that many motels and hotels permit crate-trained dogs, since they cannot damage the room if they are confined. If you're traveling for business purposes, however, you'll most likely have to find boarding facilities for your dog while you are working. If you are staying at a hotel, check to see whether it has boarding kennels on the grounds. (And if your dog is an experienced kennel veteran, he'll have no problem staying in a strange kennel for a few hours during the day.)

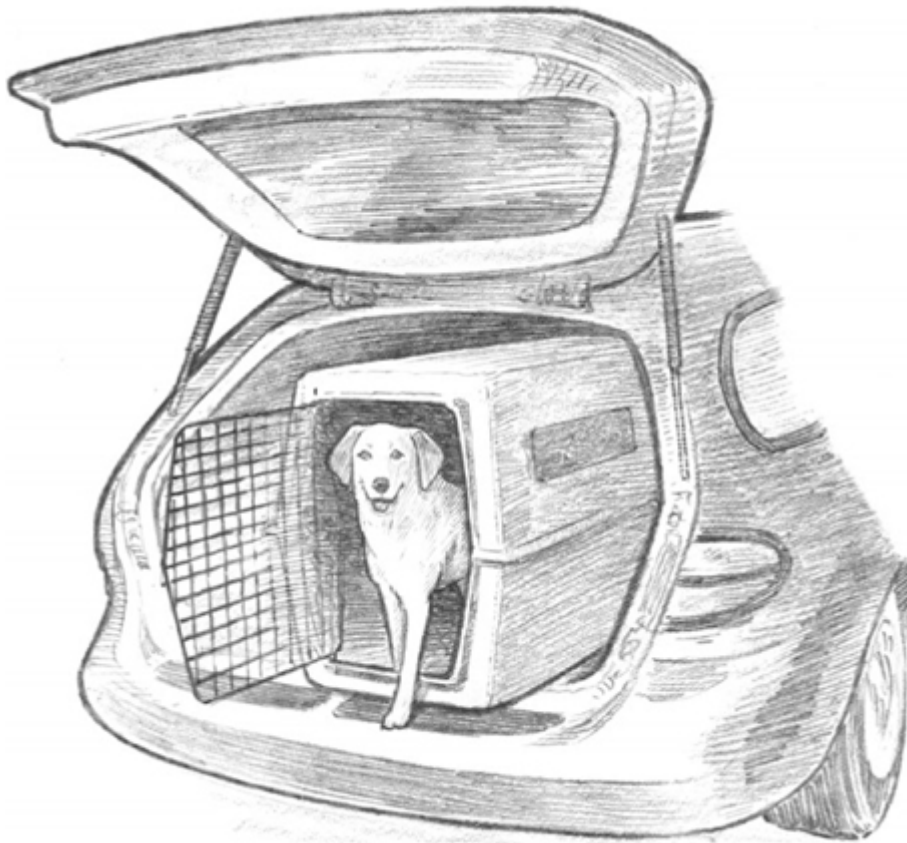
### **An Owner's Responsibility**

Whenever you are traveling with a dog, be a responsible owner. Never allow your dog to eliminate where it may offend others. Bushes, flowers, trees, and cars are off-limits. Remember to take along items such as plastic bags to dispose of your dog's elimination. Use a bag over your hand, like a glove, and pick up the fecal matter. Pull the

ends of the bag from your wrist and over the end of your hand, enclosing the fecal matter inside. Tie the ends and dispose of the bag in a proper container. Never leave your dog's feces on the grass, parking lot, or any other area where someone might step in it.

### **Car Concerns**

Always be certain that direct sunlight does not shine on the crate, no matter what the outside temperature is or whether the vehicle is moving or parked. Sunlight on a crate can cause intense heat buildup inside, possibly resulting in heatstroke or death.



*Many families have fenced-in enclosures in the rear of their car for their dog. A crate serves the same purpose, but it's also portable and offers a safe, familiar, comforting environment for the dog.*



## Other Storey Books You May Enjoy

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