



A Guide to Using Professional Pet Sitting Services

There's No Place Like Home

More than 60% of all the households in the United States have some kind of pet. In fact, there are an estimated 110 million cats and dogs alone, not to mention all the hamsters, birds, fish, and other pets. According to the American Humane Society, these pets are happiest when they're at home, surrounded by familiar sights, sounds and smells.

In the past, however, most pet owners had few choices concerning care for their animals when they were away from home. They could turn to friends, neighbors or professional boarders -- all of which are possible solutions, but not ideal for every pet. Many have found that a new alternative presents the best choice of all -- a professional pet care giver who comes into the home to care for the pet while the owner is away. That is indeed why in-home pet-care is one of the fastest growing industries in the country today.

According to the experts, from the pet's perspective, the familiar environment, diet and exercise routine, along with the personal attention provided by a professional pet care-giver are the perfect answers. Eliminating the trauma of being transported and minimizing exposure to illnesses of other animals are certainly additional advantages to the owner and pet alike.

The in-home pet-care solution is a relief to most owners who no longer have to impose on family, friends or neighbors or have the inconvenience of transporting the pet. There are also extra services offered, such as crime-deterrent measures, watering plants, bringing in the mail, etc.

The incredible growth of the in-home pet-care industry over the past few years is evidence of its effectiveness in well satisfied owners with well cared for pets.

The Benefits of Using a Professional Pet Sitter

There are numerous benefits of using a professional pet care-giver; once you have experienced them, you will become an avid user. Each day when you are away, the professional will visit your home to feed, care for and play with your pet. The professional will have a responsibility for both your pet and your home, so you should give the selection of your pet sitter serious consideration. When you hire a professional pet sitter, make sure you take the time for an interview and have all your questions ready. The services offered and fees charged can vary widely. You should find out whether the pet sitter is bonded, has commercial liability insurance coverage, and is willing to provide references. Ask for documented proof of these and take the time to check references. Also, it will be important to see how the professional interacts with your pet. And note what information the care-giver requires from you before taking on an assignment.

Advantages for the Pet

The pet remains in his or her safe, secure environment, where all the sights, smells, and sounds are familiar. The pet follows his or her customary diet and exercise routine and medical treatments. The pet is not exposed to illnesses or parasites from other animals. The pet is not traumatized by travel in a car or unfamiliar environment. The pet receives love and personal attention while the owner is away.

Benefits for the Pet Owner

The pet owner is not inconvenienced or upset by having to transport the pet. The pet owner does not have to impose on a friend, family member or neighbor (who sometimes forgets). The pet owner's home is made more secure by crime deterrent measures provided by most professional pet care-givers. The owner is secure in the knowledge that while he or she is away the pet is in capable and caring hands. The pet owner can utilize other special services provided by most professional pet-sitters.

Using Your Pet Sitting Service Most Effectively

Once you have made the decision to enlist the services of a pet sitter, you will find you have discovered a new friend for your pet and someone who will be of great help to you. To ensure a successful relationship with your pet sitter, we suggest you follow these simple guidelines:

Give Us Your Pet's History and Habits

In order to schedule the visits, your sitter will want to know the important routines in your pet's day -- eating, sleeping, walking or playing. Your sitter will want to know about all the major and minor health problems your pet may have (honesty is important here) and detailed information on any medication as well as your desires in case of emergency. Tell your sitter where favorite toys are kept or, if your dog is a "chewer", where the chew toys are. (Also guard against personal items being chewed while you are away.) Tell your sitter where your pet's favorite hiding places are. This will prevent panic by the sitter looking for your pet. Your pet sitter needs to know of any unusual habits your pet may have (such as changes in bowel movements, eating habits, fears, etc.) Provide some written verification of up to date vaccinations for your pet (tags on collars are good). Provide identification tags on all pets, including cats.

Plan Ahead

Call to make your pet sitting reservations as early as possible -- especially for holiday times. If you don't have an extra key to your house, you will need to have one or two made for your sitter before you go away (make sure you try it out first). Buy extra food, litter and supplies for when you will be away and in the event you may stay away longer than you had anticipated. If your dog is not used to walking on a leash, you should practice with him before leaving. Be sure your dog's collar fits properly for walking and has an identification tag.

Prepare Your Home Before You Leave

Clean out food from your refrigerator that may spoil when you are gone and don't leave dirty dishes in the sink that could attract pests and interfere with the sitter's work. Leave some piece of clothing that you have recently worn near where your pet sleeps to "remind" him or her of you. Leave your vet's phone number in case of emergency. Move valuables away from windows. Leave the right sized food and water bowls out for your pet's use and clean the bowls out before you leave. Put away bikes, outdoor toys and lawn furniture as they can be easily stolen. Leave everything needed for the care of your pet in one general area so the sitter doesn't have to search for leashes, food cans, and especially medicine. If the sitter will be visiting in the evenings, provide a timer light in the house so the sitter won't have to walk into a dark house. It will be friendlier for your pet as well. Mow your grass and arrange for a neighbor to shovel snow. If you live in an area that has extreme winter weather, arrange for a neighbor to have a key to your home in case of emergency and in the event that the sitter is unable to make a visit. Be sure the sitter has the name and number of your neighbor. Inform neighbors who may be looking out for your property that a pet sitter will be making visits to your home.

Communication is Important

Get the telephone number of the place(s) where you will be staying while away so that you can leave it with your pet sitter for emergencies. If you find you will be returning earlier or later than expected, call to inform your pet sitter as soon as you know. Remember to check the time difference if you call the sitter with some new instructions after you leave. Please be considerate of those who have offices in their homes. Call during office hours unless it's an emergency. Let the sitter know if there are any rooms that are "off limits" for pets and sitters. If other people might also be checking on your pet or house, let them and the sitter know who is responsible for what and when they may be in the house (and let them exchange telephone numbers). Leave a list of numbers that may be helpful to a sitter in any emergency: vet, electrician, plumber, maid service, yard or pool maintenance, etc. Tell your sitter where you keep items like the vacuum cleaner, mop, broom, dustpan, trash bags, etc. in case of spills. Make sure the sitter knows the location of your fuse box or circuit breaker and where to find new fuses.

Other Services May Be Available

If plants are to be watered, your sitter will want to know where your plants are located and how often and how much they should be watered. Lights can be turned on in the evening and off in the morning and curtains can be opened and closed. Newspapers and mail can be picked up. Tell your sitter where you would like them to be placed.

Safety Is Critical

Secure any outside gates to a dog lot or swimming pool. Make sure all the doors and windows are locked. Unplug any appliances that won't be used to prevent damage during electrical storms or injury to pets. Consider leaving a radio on while you're away. It could be a crime deterrent and may also keep your pet company. Don't leave anything out that could be harmful to your pet -- Christmas tree tinsel and pine needles, strings or ribbon or anything that could accidentally be swallowed. Never leave your pet in a garage -- there are too many hazardous substances found there such as fertilizers, antifreeze and pesticides. If you must, be sure to pet-proof the area. Make sure your clothes dryer is closed and close all back doors. Do not hide keys outside for the sitter or other people who may be entering your home. Be sure that all pets are inside the house that are supposed to be. If the cat(s) escape before you leave, be sure to inform the sitter so he or she knows to look for the animal outside and does not waste time hunting inside.

How our Service Works

When you call Gift of Time Ohio Services, we arrange for a free visit to your home to:

- Meet you and your loving pets
- Get detailed information about caring for your pets and your home
- Get a veterinary release signature
- Complete a service agreement
- Pick up a door key

During this visit you decide how often you want the sitter to visit, and what services you want performed.

Each visit to your home includes:

- Providing love and care when you're not there
- Fresh food and water
- Brushing, combing, and providing playtime
- Give medications, vitamins, or other special care
- Arrange for medical treatment in case of illness
- Scoop the litter box and clean up all accidents

At the Clients Request:

- Collect mail
- Bring in newspapers
- Turning on / off lights
- Opening / closing drapery
- Watering a few plants
- Many other services available

Hours of Service

Note: We will do our best to honor specific time request for any visit.

Dogs: AM visits will be between 5 am and 10 am.

PM visits will be between 5 pm and 10 pm.

Note: Dog visits will always be approximately 8 hours apart for clients scheduling 2 visits per day.

Cats: Cats will be visited at approximately the same time each day, sometime between 5 AM and 10 PM depending on our schedule, location of other jobs, and weather conditions.