



Holiday pet care

We look at boarding kennels and pet sitting as a way of getting your holiday pet care needs licked.

AT A GLANCE

What's available.

How much does it cost?

Finding a kennel.

There is one group of people for whom booking a holiday is about more than just sorting flights and hotels. Pet owners have the added burden of organising care arrangements for their four-legged friends while they are away. For some, this is no more than dropping the dog off to family or finding a friend prepared to make house calls. However

if you live in a remote area, or are not fortunate enough to have such altruistic people in your life, finding a solution to your holiday pet care needs can quickly become a head scratching issue.

In response to the growing need for pet care services, the number of boarding kennels and catteries operating around the country has grown in recent

years. They are mostly used by owners away on holiday, but can also be useful for other occasions, such as when the owner moves house or requires a hospital stay. However, for first time users of an animal boarding kennels there are many factors to consider. These can range from understanding the kind of services that are available, to finding a



reputable establishment to which you can entrust your beloved pet.

What services are available?

The exact nature of the service and quality of accommodation varies from place to place. In relation to dog kennels, generally speaking you can expect your dog to be accommodated indoors in an individual kennel (heated when required) with bedding and to be fed and watered twice a day. Most kennels have a vet on standby in case of emergencies.

You can also expect that exercise

facilities will be available to your dog. This may be in the form of your dog being taken for a walk and/or having the daily use of a secure enclosure or playground facilities within which to run around. It is standard practice for many kennels to exercise each dog individually; however you may need to specify this first if you don't wish your dog to mix with other dogs or to be walked as part of a group.

Many establishments cater to dogs with special requirements such as blindness, deafness or old age. Obviously this depends on the kennel and would again need to be agreed before any stay is undertaken. Dogs with contagious conditions are not usually accepted due to the risk it would place on other residents.

In the case of catteries, you can expect your cat to have its own individual heated accommodation unit or 'chalet'. If more than one cat from the same family is staying at the cattery it may be possible to book larger chalets. For example, the Moggie Motel, located in Meath, has chalets which can accommodate up to four cats at once. Again bedding is provided and your cat is fed and watered twice a day or as often as required. Most chalets have toys for your cat to play with, as well as specially adapted shelves for climbing and scratching posts for your cat to get busy with. There should also be a nice view for your cat to enjoy as well as an individual exercise area or 'cat run'.

Certain kennels also have facilities for rabbits, guinea pigs, pet rats and other small animals, while some establishments even provide delivery and collection services. For example, Wicklow-based Barndarrig Boarding Kennels will collect and deliver cats or dogs staying for a period of at least ten days. The charge for this service is €1 per kilometre.

How much does it cost?

The cost of boarding your pet varies across the market. Because of the extra work involved, accommodating dogs tends to be more expensive than cats. There may be variations in charges based on the size of the dog or discounted rates if more than one dog is sharing. Generally speaking, it costs in the region of €12 - €15 per night to board your dog in a kennel. This may vary depending on the size and breed of the dog. For example, Happyhounds in Meath

charges €12 per night for small dogs such as a West Highland White Terrier.

Medium sized dogs such as Labradors cost €13 per night. To book a night's stay for a large dog such as a Great Dane at this kennel will cost you €14. If two small dogs are sharing, the cost is €22 per day or €26 per day for two large dogs. Clifden Kennels in Galway charges €15 per night for boarding one dog, regardless of size.

Most catteries charge €8 - €12 per day to look after your cat, with discounts where more than one cat is sharing. The cost to book your cat into Barndarrig Kennels is €8 per night. For two or three cats sharing, the cost is €13 and €18 per night respectively. This kennel also has a 'family suite' facility which can house four cats at a cost of €23 per night. Cavan based Kaituna Cattery charges €10 per night for an individual cat, or €16 for two cats sharing. Three or four cats can share a family unit for €24 and €30 per night respectively.

In the case of longer stays, a deposit may be required and as with human hotels, if you cancel a booking, a cancellation fee may apply. Moreover, animals not checked out or collected at the agreed time may be charged the cost of an extra night's stay. It's also worth remembering that if you are using a boarding kennel or cattery because you need your animal to be cared for while you are in hospital, then your pet insurance policy, if you have one, may reimburse some of the costs involved.

Finding a good kennel

Most people who board their pets already have a regular establishment that they and their animal are comfortable with. However, if you've never used a kennel before, or have only just got a pet, it's important you find the right match for your pet care needs. This is particularly relevant where your pet is of a difficult temperament or has special care requirements.

The Yellow Pages will have a list of kennels and catteries in your area. Good establishments should be happy for you to visit their facilities and supply you with references or testimonials of satisfied customers. Your local vet's office is another good starting point when trying to locate a reputable kennel or cattery.

A useful resource is the Irish Boarding Kennels and Cattery Association (IBKCA). The IBKCA was set up by a group of dog

Useful contacts

ISPCA

National Animal Centre
Derryglogher Lodge
Keenagh
Co. Longford
tel 043 332 5035
email info@ispca.ie
www.ispca.ie

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Head Office
Agriculture House
Kildare St.
Dublin 2
1890 200 510
email
info@agriculture.gov.ie
www.agriculture.gov.ie

Irish Boarding Kennels & Cattery Association

www.ibkc.com

Pet Sitters International

www.petsit.com

kennels and cattery owners who were concerned by the lack of standards in the Irish boarding kennel industry. IBKCA members subscribe to and are governed by a Code of Ethics to ensure the safety, security and well-being of animals entrusted to their care. The Code of Ethics is available on the Association's website (see *Useful contacts*), as well as a list of its members broken down by county. If a consumer believes a member did not live up to the Code of Ethics, they are urged to bring the matter to the IBKCA's attention.

Questions to ask

Regardless of how you find a kennel, the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals recommends that you ask a number of key questions before making any final decision:

- Is an up to date vaccination certificate required?
- Is the kennel well staffed?
- Does the kennel's staff have a good attitude?
- Is the kennel clean and well-maintained?
- Is the accommodation warm, roomy and clean?
- Are dogs given plenty of supervised exercise?

Places in kennels book up fast so it's very important to plan ahead. This is especially true if you're a first time user, as you may need time to find the right one. "Check out the kennel yourself to make sure your pet will be comfortable, and leave your vet's details," the ISPCA says. Make sure your pet is up to date with vaccinations (including kennel cough) - you will need a certificate to prove this to most kennels and catteries before your pet can check in.

What about pet sitting?

Another rapidly growing holiday pet care option is pet sitting. This can be an alternative to using a boarding facility which some pet owners may find more convenient for both them and their pets. Because pets are cared for in their own homes there is no 'travel trauma' associated with moving, and no need for them to adapt to a new environment. Cats in particular may prefer to be left in their own surroundings rather than be accommodated in a cattery – especially if only left alone for a few days.

There are several professional pet sitting service providers throughout the country that consumers can use. Kildare

PET PASSPORT

The Pet Passport is a European Union document that proves certain conditions have been met to allow you to take your pet on holiday to and from eligible countries without the need for quarantine. The passport shows that your pet is from an eligible country, has a microchip embedded in it, has been vaccinated against rabies, treated for tick and tapeworm, and has been successfully blood-tested for antibodies for at least six months. The cost of obtaining a passport for a pet varies depending on your vet's fees for fitting the microchip and giving vaccinations, but it should be in the region of €225 - €300. It is recommended that you allow at least seven months from the date of the first vaccination before your pet receives its passport.

Your pet's identification and all of the passport details will be checked by your carrier. In the case of ferry travel, these checks will take place in France, before embarkation. Airlines do their checks in the Irish airport. Checks are intended to establish that your pet complies with all of the conditions of the pet passport system, and there is no room for manoeuvre whatsoever if any of the entry conditions are not met.

Dog Walking Services offer a pet sitting service with prices starting from €15 per day. This includes two visits to your home each day and can include walking, feeding, play time, dispensing of medicines, and even visits to and from the vet. Specific pet care requirements can be arranged for at an additional cost. Another example is Cork Pet Sitters which provides a variety of services including dog walking, puppy sitting, cat sitting and small pet care. In the case of cat sitting, this provider will leave fresh food and water for your cat as well as grooming it and cleaning out a litter tray. The cost is €8 per day for a 45 minute visit or €14 for two 30 minute visits.

Better to be safe than sorry

Since a pet sitter will have access to your home while you are away you need to ensure that he or she is honest, reliable and trustworthy. Unfortunately there is no national association in Ireland which can help you do this.

There is an international group called Pet Sitters International (PSI). PSI aims to establish and maintain professional standards across the industry as whole. The organisation (of which Cork Pet Sitters is a member) has a set of guidelines which members must abide by. It also suggests a useful list of questions that consumers should ask before availing of the services of a pet sitter. These include:

- Does the pet sitter willingly and happily provide references?
- Is the pet sitter bonded and insured?
- How much experience does the pet sitter have in caring for your particular type of pet?
- What does the pet sitter do if your

pet needs medical care?

- Does the pet sitter have a clean criminal history (i.e. Garda checked)?

Take them with you instead?

For owners who can't bear to be away from their pet while on holiday, bringing them along is always an option. However if you are travelling outside the British Isles, it's vital that your pet has an up-to-date Pet Passport if you want it to avoid a six month stay in quarantine. Animals coming to Ireland from the UK (including the Channel Islands or Isle of Man) are not subject to quarantine or passport restrictions as there is a common travel zone between Ireland and the UK.

However, aside from complying with the legal obligations associated with pet travel, consumers also need to be mindful of your transportation carrier's own restrictions on pet travel. For example, Ryanair does not accept any animals on board its flights other than guide dogs. Aer Lingus operates the same policy on shorthaul flights but pets (cats and dogs only) can be booked on direct flights between New York, Boston, Chicago and Orlando. The pet, which must travel in a crate, is transported in the cargo hold, subject to a €160 charge per crate.

Aer Arann is the only national carrier that permits pets on domestic and UK flights to and from Ireland. Again, the pet must travel in a crate at a cost of €50 per round trip. To find out about taking your pet to other European destinations, check the list of approved carriers (including ferry companies) and routes from The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (see *Useful contacts*).