

HOW TO SELECT A KENNEL

If your vacation plans don't include your pet, you may be thinking of boarding your pet in a kennel. The following recommendations will help you select a safe, secure kennel where your pet will receive proper care during your absence.

Call for an appointment to personally visit the kennel. If you are now allowed to look at the facilities, head for the nearest exit and take your pet elsewhere. A reputable kennel owner will be more than willing to let you inspect the premises and ask questions. To avoid upsetting the present "guests" and setting off an uproar of barking you should not expect to be allowed to walk through the area where the animals are caged. However, there should be a door or window through which you can see inside.

In checking the facilities look for clean cages, a pleasant odor, adequate lighting, and availability of fresh water. Determine if the cages are heated in the winter and cooled in the summer. Make sure the cages are large enough and the animals are exercised daily. Outside areas should be covered. Find out if the animals have outside runs or if they are walked and if so, where.

Be sure the cages and runs are secure. Don't be hesitant about asking direct questions on this subject. It is better to question the security of the kennels before boarding than to run the risk of returning from your travels and discover your pet is lost or has escaped. The kennel should have secure cages and runs which will prevent this from happening. If, however, your dog is an "escape artist", say so! Alert the owner of the kennel to the problem. They can then take necessary precautions to insure your dog will be where you expect to find him upon your return.

CHECKLIST

Security

1. Are the runs made of chain-link or some other sturdy fencing material?
2. Is the fencing in good repair? Your pet could catch his chain collar on a bit of torn fencing and strangle. It is advisable to remove your animals' chain choke collar and replace it with a leather collar.
3. Is the fencing low enough so your dog can't wriggle under it, and high enough so he can't leap over it?
4. Is the fencing equipped with some sort of anti-climbing device at the top?
5. Is the floor of the run made of concrete? (To prevent diggers from tunnelling out; also, it's easier to disinfect and keep clean.)
6. Are the runs and cages enclosed by fencing, so even if your dog manages to go Houdini one better, it still won't be easy for him to disappear?

Care

1. Does the management keep adequate information concerning its "guests"? (Name of veterinarian, age of pet, etc.)
2. Do they have a veterinarian "on call"?
3. Is someone on the premises after office hours?
4. Are the facilities for boarding cats separate from the area occupied by the dogs?
5. Does the staff have a positive, concerned attitude toward the animals?
6. Is the size of the staff adequate to properly care for all the animals?
7. Last but not least, do the present "guests" seem happy, relaxed and content?

(Special thanks to Prince George's County Humane Society, Laurel, MD for providing this article. Individuals and organizations are invited to share their "how to" information with other HSUS readers.)