

# Care options for cats while you're away

Summertime is travel time for many people, and if you own a pet, trip planning requires extra thought. De-



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isions need to be made about who is going to care for your cat and what changes may occur in his routine.

Owners rarely take their cats on trips since most cats don't enjoy travel. If you take your cat, be sure he has at least one form of identification (collar with tag, or microchip), a reliable carrier and access to his regular diet. If you fly with him, be sure he is vaccinated for rabies, has a health certificate and that you have a leash and harness to use when TSA requires you to remove him from the carrier during security screening.

**Staying home:** I'll bet if we could ask our cats what they would like, most would request to stay home and have someone come in and feed them and clean their litter boxes. You might be lucky and have a healthy cat that doesn't need medications and will come out and say hi to the neighbor or family member who helps out. This situation is ideal – your cat is monitored by someone you trust.

**Pet sitters:** You can pick a professional pet sitter who is licensed and bonded and comes with references. Go online to the National Association of Pet Sitters ([petsitters.org](http://petsitters.org)) and Pet Sitters International ([petsit.com](http://petsit.com)). An experienced pet sitter should be able to administer medication, clean and feed your cat and be ob-

servant about how well your cat is eating and eliminating. He or she should be given written authorization to take your cat to your vet if needed. Let your vet know you have authorized care.

I recommend that you get referrals and meet the pet sitter in person so that you clearly communicate your needs and they can see the environment in which they will be working.

**Boarding:** There are many boarding facilities, so keep your cat's comfort in mind. Some board dogs and cats, some cats only. Cage sizes vary, as do amenities and employee experience with cats.

Some kennels require more vaccinations than your veterinarian routinely administers or recommends. Cats can become stressed during boarding, and this can lower their immunity, making them more susceptible to infections.

Often, your veterinarian offers boarding services. Vets should have well-trained and observant staff that is familiar with your cat's personality and needs. They should be experienced with medical care and prepared should your cat's health change. Some cats are challenging to medicate, so your vet may be the best option if treatment is required.

Vacations are meant to be fun, so pick the right caregiving situation for your cat so you don't have to worry about him. You shouldn't feel guilty about leaving your cat, because others are qualified to care for him and will give him attention.

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