

KENNELING YOUR DOG

Dr. Douglas Brum

Niles Animal Hospital and Bird Medical Center

7278 N. Milwaukee Ave. Niles, IL 60714

(847)-647-9325 FAX (847)-647-8498

www.nilesanimalhospital.com

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

While kennels range from the barebones to the ultra-fancy, keep in mind that the frills are meant mainly for owners. The dog really doesn't care whether Chopin plays softly in his sleeping quarters. What is important is general safety and the friendliness and competence of the staff.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A KENNEL

- The first thing you should do is visit the kennel before you board. Most kennels welcome these visits, and it gives you a chance to see their facilities and ask specific questions. Your questions should be answered to your satisfaction, so that you will feel comfortable leaving your pet when you are away.
- The kennel should be clean inside and out. Proper sanitation is one of the most important aspects of preventing the spread of contagious diseases. The cages and runs should look and smell clean. Animals that are currently boarding should be clean and appear well cared for. Look at the outdoor area where the dogs are walked. Waste material should be routinely removed, leaving the area relatively free of fecal material.
- Getting a certain amount of exercise is important for each animal, but how much and how often depends on the individual dog's need and the ability of the kennel to offer these services. Discuss this with the kennel. Find out how often dogs are walked, or if they are allowed to run free in an enclosed area. Some kennels will give dogs extra walks or exercise time, but often at an additional charge. Still, the added activity may be well worth it for the active dog.
- Indoors, the boarding facility should have adequate cage and run sizes, with larger cages for bigger dogs. Natural light from windows is great, but if not available, indoor lighting should be adequate. The air should circulate well and not smell stagnant. Proper ventilation will significantly decrease the risk of disease transmission.
- Find out how many animals are routinely boarded at a single time and the number of staff taking care of the animals. More people and fewer animals may mean more attention for the individual animals.
- Some kennels have associations with specific veterinarians either on the premises or working nearby. Find out how sudden illness is addressed. The kennel's veterinarian may be the one contacted for treatment, or it might be your regular veterinarian. If you have a specific preference, discuss this with the kennel owner.
- If your dog is on medication that is given several times a day, make sure that the kennel personnel are able to administer it appropriately. Some kennels may not be able to give medication as often as your pet requires.
- Some boarding facilities offer an added benefit of grooming services. Consider having your dog groomed the day he or she is scheduled to go home. It is always nice for your dog to come back from the kennel smelling clean, fresh and newly groomed.

KENNEL REQUIREMENTS

- All dogs that are to be boarded should be healthy and free of contagious diseases. If your dog has a medical problem that is stable or currently under treatment, let the kennel know prior to boarding to make sure they are comfortable boarding your dog.

- A kennel may require a health certificate from your veterinarian and proof of your dog's most recent vaccinations.
- If your dog has fleas or other external or internal parasites, he or she should be treated prior to arrival or on admission to the kennel.
- Certain kennels have very specific requirements regarding vaccinations. Don't assume that your dog has had all of the vaccinations required without checking with the kennel first. For example, some veterinarians are not routinely vaccinating each year for DHLPP (distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, and parvovirus). This may be the veterinarian's general policy, or for specific health reasons of the individual animal. Other times, only one part of the DHLPP might be given. There is no generally accepted rule regarding vaccinations in dogs. In all cases, check with the kennel so that any discrepancies can be addressed prior to boarding. Sometimes, a letter from your veterinarian will be all that is required. Other times, additional vaccines may need to be given.
- A kennel cough (bordetella) vaccination is a common vaccine required by kennels that may not be routinely given by your veterinarian. It is a vaccine that offers protection from bordetella bronchiseptica, a contagious infection that causes upper respiratory signs (mainly coughing) in dogs. The vaccine is given either subcutaneous or intranasally (via the nose). It is usually administered yearly, but some kennels may additionally require it shortly before boarding.
- As a general rule, most kennels require DHLPP and kennel cough vaccinations to be given yearly, and rabies vaccines administered according to individual state law.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BRING TO THE KENNEL

- It is always a good idea to bring your dog's own food to the kennel. Abrupt changes in food commonly lead to diarrhea in many animals, especially when they are in a more stressful environment (i.e. away from home). In dogs that tend to get diarrhea when stressed, a high fiber diet while boarding may help. If your dog is on a special diet or has special dietary needs, make sure the kennel is aware of this, and that they follow your specific instructions.
- If your dog has a special bed or favorite toy, ask if you can bring them with your pet. Familiar items from home will make your pet feel more comfortable while you are away.
- The kennel should have several contact numbers available so, if needed, the appropriate people can be contacted in the event of an emergency. First, provide the number (if possible) where you can be reached while you are away. If you are unavailable, a friend or relative's number should be accessible. This person should be able to make any emergency decisions if needed. Discuss your wishes with this person prior to your leaving. The kennel should also have your veterinarian's number in case there are medical problems. This is even more important if there are any on going medical problems with your pet.
- If your dog typically receives medications at home, they should be continued while boarding. Bring the medications with you to the kennel, and make sure the kennel is aware of the specific problem being treated. If you do not feel that kenneling is appropriate for your pet, you may want to consider hiring a pet sitter. These animal loving people will come to your home to care for your pet. Some may even spend the night.