

# DOGGY KENNEL vs. PET SITTER FOR HOLIDAY TRAVEL

**Q** *The holidays are arriving and we will be doing a lot of traveling. We have two young dogs, ages one and two. They get along great. What would work better -- hiring a professional pet sitter or boarding them at a doggy kennel while we travel? I want to make sure they don't experience separation anxiety and feel safe and happy either at home or at a boarding kennel.*

● Arden Moore ● Steve Brooks

**F**IRST, PAWS UP FOR BEING A CARING PET PARENT by wanting what is the best option for your doggy duo. The fact that your two dogs love hanging out together and have formed a great friendship bond is a definite plus.

In making the decision whether to hire a professional pet sitter or board your dogs at a quality kennel, weigh these factors:

**1. Your dogs' energy levels.** Your dogs are both young and I'm betting they have lots of energy and love social interactions. If so, they may enjoy the boarding option because it offers both supervised play and the opportunity to share a room together. After a day of play, they can recharge and snooze together. If your dogs, however, are more sofa loungers who enjoy being homebodies, then definitely consider having a pet sitter come to your home for three visits during the day and definitely stay overnight. Your dogs are a bit too young to trust being home alone, especially at night.

**2. Your dogs' emotional states.** Some dogs can become confused and even anxious when left home alone without their favorite humans for several hours. They can react by chewing on table legs or the television remote, urinating on the living room rug to leave their scent (pee to a dog is a smell of comfort) or unleashing non-stop soul-filled barking and howling.

Do a candid assessment of your dogs. A tired dog is a happy dog, so the boarding option may be ideal if you know your dogs need lots of structured activities during the day. Dogs who sport more confidence may fare very well by having a new "friend" – the pet sitter visit during the day and hang out at night.

Whether you choose to board or hire a pet sitter, do your homework for your dogs' sake. Seek a professional pet sitter who is licensed and bonded and belongs to a national group such as Pet Sitters International or the National Association of Professional Pet Sitters. If you wish to board, take time to visit the premises in advance to see how the boarding dogs are doing. Make sure the place is clean and free of odor. Make sure that the boarding center requires proof that your dogs' are up-to-date on their vaccinations to protect them from lots of canine contagious diseases, such as Bordetella, distemper, parvovirus and leptospirosis.

And, safe travels! 🐾

---

ARDEN MOORE hosts the *Oh Behave* weekly radio show on *Pet Life Radio.com* and is founder of the *Pet First Aid 4U*. Learn more at [www.ardenmoore.com](http://www.ardenmoore.com).

**D**OGGIE CARE SHOULD NOT CAUSE SEPARATION ANXIETY, ALTHOUGH, if your dog already has separation anxiety, they may not be able to tolerate being crated or kenneled. On the other hand, sometimes being around other dogs with human supervision 24/7 can ease anxiety.

Before you pack your bags for holiday travel, consider these tips:

**Boarding Kennel Tips:** The most important factor to evaluate is the staff's qualifications; kennels can vary dramatically when it comes to training, safety and quality of care. Ask for referrals and tour the facility. *If you are denied the opportunity to see where the dogs are kenneled, go someplace else.* Set up a "trial" visit before you leave for the holidays. Don't be afraid to ask questions of current clients picking up and dropping off; people love to talk about what's best for their pups!

- "All-inclusive" or "a la carte"? Consider pricing, policies, and pick-up/drop-off hours. Can you drop off/pick up any time, or only during certain hours? Do they provide a web cam service to observe your dogs, giving you peace of mind that the facility is delivering on its promise?
- Is there 24-hour care? How are pets monitored; what is the dog-to-human supervisor ratio?
- Is there an outdoor play area? Are dogs separated by size and temperament during playtime?
- Do dogs get alone time to chill and rest, or are they in a group the whole time? Many dogs get overwhelmed and need their own space.

**Pet Sitter Tips:** If you decide on an in-home professional pet sitter, my number-one tip is to get referrals. It's also important to consider whether your dogs like the person. Set up a "trial" to ensure doggy sitting is ideal. Create a contact list with Vets' info and a 24-hour veterinary number and address. Include an emergency backup person if the sitter has an issue.

- Set expectations: twice daily walks or supervised in the yard for potty and play?
- Confirm they will spend the night at your house to reassure you and your pups!
- Are they experienced in caring for your dog's breed and temperament?
- Experienced feeding and dispensing medications?

If neither option is ideal, consider my first choice and take your dogs with you. It's a great way to bond, and there's nothing like having your whole family with you during the holidays! 🐾

---

STEVE BROOKS (CPDT-KA), Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT/KA), Canine Behavioral Expert and author of *DOG BITES* with STEVE BROOKS, shares 20 years of training techniques using "dog bites" as rewards for good behavior. [SteveBrooksK9U.com](http://SteveBrooksK9U.com)