

# Why You Should Use A Professional Pet Sitter

A Guide to Using Professional Pet Sitting Services



**NAPPS**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF PROFESSIONAL  
PET SITTERS®

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## There's No Place Like Home!

More than 63% of all the households in the United States have some kind of pet. In fact, there are an estimated 169 million cats and dogs alone, not to mention hamsters, birds, fish and more. According to the American Humane Society, these pets are happiest when they're at home, surrounded by familiar sights, sounds and smells.

In the past, pet owners had few choices concerning care for their animals when they were away. They could turn to friends, neighbors or professional boarders - all of which are solutions, but not ideal for every pet. This alternative presents the best choice of all - a professional pet caregiver who comes into your home to care for the pet while you are away. That is indeed why in-home pet care is one of the fastest growing industries in the country today.

According to experts, a familiar environment, diet and exercise, along with the personal attention of a professional pet caregiver are the perfect answers. Eliminating the trauma of being transported and minimizing exposure to illnesses of other animals are additional advantages.

The in-home pet care solution is a relief to most owners who no longer have to impose on family, friends or neighbors or have the inconvenience of transporting the pet. There are also extra services offered, such as crime-deterrent measures, watering plants, bringing in the mail, etc. The incredible growth of the in-home pet care industry over the past few years is evidence of its effectiveness in well-satisfied owners with well cared for pets.

## The Benefits of Using a Professional Pet Sitter

There are numerous benefits of using a professional pet caregiver. Each day you are away, the professional will visit your home to feed, care for and play with your pet. The professional will have responsibility for both your pet and your home, so carefully select your pet sitter.

When you hire a professional pet sitter, take the time for an interview and have your questions ready. The services offered and fees can vary widely. Find out if the pet sitter is bonded, has commercial liability insurance coverage, and is willing to provide references. Ask for documented proof and check references. See how the professional interacts with your pet and note the information required from your pet sitter.

## Finding a Pet Sitter

The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters has established a nationwide referral network, which will give you the name, address and phone number of a qualified NAPPS member in your area. Visit our nationwide referral service at [www.petsitters.org](http://www.petsitters.org) or call (800) 296-PETS or Headquarters at (856) 439-0324.

Check with local veterinarians, grooming shops and pet stores. Consult the Yellow Pages under *Kennels, Sitting Services, Dog and Cat Boarding or Pet Sitting*. Ask other pet owners for personal recommendations.

## What to Look For in a Reputable Pet Sitter

- Is the Pet Sitter bonded? Does the Pet Sitter have commercial liability insurance? Ask to see documentation.
- Does the Pet Sitter provide references?
- Does the Pet Sitter furnish literature describing services and starting fees?
- Will the Pet Sitter visit the home to meet you and the pet and to obtain detailed information?
- Is the Pet Sitter comfortable with your pet?
- Does the Pet Sitter have a service contract clearly spelling out services and fees?
- Does the Pet Sitter have a veterinarian on call for emergencies?
- What contingency plan is in effect in the event of personal illness of the Pet Sitter?
- Has the Pet Sitter been trained by his or her company? Are there prerequisites for employment?
- Does the Pet Sitter have an established system for handling customer complaints?
- Does the Pet Sitter telephone to determine if the owner has returned home as scheduled or require the client to notify the sitter of their arrival home?
- Does the Pet Sitter provide a rating form for customer evaluation?
- Is the Pet Sitter a member of the National Association of Professional Pet Sitters?

## Using Your Pet Sitting Service Most Effectively

Once you have obtained a Pet Sitter, you will find you have discovered a new friend for your pet and a reliable help to you. To ensure a successful relationship, we suggest you follow these simple guidelines:

### 1 *Pet's History and Habits*

- What is your pet's daily routine?
- Does your pet have any health problems?
- What medications or emergency procedures should be provided?
- Where are favorite toys kept? Is your dog a "chewer?" Where are the "chew toys?"
- What are your pet's favorite hiding places?
- Does your pet have unusual habits or fears?
- Can you provide verification of vaccinations for your pet?
- Are all pets wearing identification tags?

### 2 *Plan Ahead*

- Make your pet sitting reservations as early as possible - especially for holiday times.
- Have an extra key to your house. You will need to have one or two made for your sitter before you go away. (Make sure you try it out first.)

- Advise the petsitter of the location of leashes.
- Practice leash walking with your pet and be sure your dog's collar fits properly and has identification.
- Buy extra food, litter and supplies for your pet and advise your pet sitter of the location.

### **3 Prepare Your Home Before You Leave**

- Remove food that may spoil from your refrigerator. Do not leave opened food on the counter or dirty dishes in the sink that can attract insects and rodents.
- Leave a piece of clothing that you have recently worn to remind your pet of you.
- Leave your vet's phone number in case of emergency.
- Move valuables away from windows.
- Leave clean pet food and water bowls.
- Put away outside toys and furniture, as they can be easily stolen.
- Keep pet supplies in one area.
- Provide a timer light so the sitter won't have to walk into a dark house. It will be friendlier for your pet and a crime deterrent, too.
- Arrange for snow removal and mowing of grass.
- Arrange for an emergency contact to have a key to your home in case of emergency and in the event the sitter is unable to make a visit. Give the sitter the name and number of your emergency contact.
- Inform your neighbors a Pet Sitter will be making visits to your home.

### **Communication is Important**

- Leave a phone number where you can be reached.
- If travel plans change, immediately notify your Pet Sitter.
- Check the time difference if you call the sitter with some new instructions after you leave. Call during office hours unless it's an emergency.
- Let the sitter know if there are any "off limit" rooms.
- If others are checking on your pet or house, inform them and the Pet Sitter of their responsibilities. Have them exchange phone numbers.
- Leave emergency phone numbers: vet, electrician, plumber, cleaning service, alarm company, etc.
- Tell your sitter where you keep cleaning supplies.
- Mention the location of your fuse box or circuit breaker and new fuses.

### **Other Services May Be Available**

- Plant Care
- Alternating Lighting Patterns
- Mail and Newspaper Pick-up
- Pet Massage
- Daily Pet Walking
- Yard Pick-up
- Grooming

## Safety Is Critical

- Secure any outside gates.
- Lock all doors and windows.
- Unplug appliances to prevent damage during storms or injury to pets.
- Consider leaving a radio on while you're away as a crime deterrent and to keep your pet company.
- Put away items that could be harmful to your pet - Christmas tree tinsel, pine needles, strings, ribbon or anything that could accidentally be swallowed.
- Never leave your pet in a garage. There are too many hazardous substances there. If you must, pet-proof the area.
- Close your clothes dryer and all back doors.
- Do not hide keys outside for the sitter.
- Be sure all pets are inside the house. If your cat(s) escape(s) before you leave, be sure to inform the sitter.

## Setting Standards for the Industry

The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters, Inc. was founded to promote excellence in pet sitting and to serve as a voice for the expanding industry. The association serves as a network for ideas and information on all aspects of pet sitting, including current industry practices.

One of NAPPS' goals is to educate the pet-owning public to the advantages of leaving pets in a home environment and to provide the pet owning public with qualified sitters following professional standards, a code of ethics and guidelines for quality pet care.

Pet Sitters can depend on NAPPS to establish professional, recognized standards for the pet sitting industry. Compliance with these standards fosters more professional at-home pet care nationwide.

The association also encourages cooperation within the pet care industry and supports legislation designed to prevent abuse of pets. In establishing these standards and guidelines for quality pet care, NAPPS developed a Code of Ethics for its members.

NAPPS Mission is:

- To provide tools and support to foster the success of members' businesses
- To promote the value of pet sitting to the public
- To advocate the welfare of animals

## The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters Code of Ethics

*As a member of the National Association of Professional Pet Sitters, I hereby pledge:*

- To provide quality care for pets entrusted to my supervision and to be ever mindful of their safety and well-being.
- To promote responsible pet ownership and to work toward increased public awareness of animal rights.
- To learn as much as possible about my profession and the animals in my care so that I can provide excellent services to each client.
- To conduct business with honesty and integrity and to avoid dishonorable or unethical business practices that would reflect poorly on the pet care industry.
- To refrain from defaming my competitors because such actions might increase distrust of Pet Sitters in general and harm the pet care industry.
- To familiarize myself with all federal, state and local laws pertaining to animal care and to obey those laws.
- To keep my clients anonymous and take reasonable precautions to make sure a client's absence from home isn't detected because of any careless actions or disclosures on my part.
- To operate my business in such a way that I will be a credit to the pet sitting industry and to my community.
- To enhance my professional skills and improve my business on a continuing basis by taking advantage of educational opportunities related to pet care.
- To work toward public recognition of pet sitting as an accepted and respected profession by my active support of the policies and programs of the National Association of Professional Pet Sitters.

## Your Professional Pet Sitter