



Although the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) is now fully operational, allowing limited movement of pets through some countries and the UK, many pet owners still prefer to leave their pets behind when they go away.

Will my cat be happy being left behind?

Cats are very much part of the family and usually like to spend time with their owners. However, travelling is a stressful experience for most cats and many are unsettled in a new environment. Cats are creatures of habit and feel secure with their own routines and familiar surroundings.

Many owners choose to make arrangements for someone else to care for their cats while they are away.

Who can care for my cat when I'm away?

There are 3 choices for pet care while you are absent:

- Place your cat in a boarding cattery
- Ask a friend or neighbour to take your cat into their home
- Find a 'pet-sitter' to come to your home to care for your cat

The best solution for a cat is to leave them with a friend or have someone come and live in your house to care for them while you are away. If you cannot do this then there are plenty of boarding catteries that will care for your pet while you away. If you have more than one cat then they will usually be able to stay together, providing company for each other.

How do I choose a boarding cattery?

It is always a worry having to leave your cat in the hands of strangers, especially in strange surroundings. Leaving your cat in a boarding cattery doesn't have to be stressful if you follow some of our tips when choosing a boarding cattery for your furry friend.

- Firstly, and probably most importantly, ask your friends and family for any recommendations for a suitable boarding cattery, if they have had a good experience then hopefully so will you and your cat. If this isn't possible, then make plenty of enquiries and visit two or three boarding catteries before you make a decision.
- When you visit each boarding cattery, find out their opening hours and visit unannounced and ask to be shown around - this shouldn't be a problem for them and they should be happy to take you around and show you all their facilities. Take particular notice of the quality and cleanliness of the individual units: are they clean, dry and draught-free; are the water bowls full and clean; are the litter trays clean; is there access to an outside run and covered area; are they secure?
- Also, do the cats have individual sleeping accommodation and runs; is there a shelf for your cat to lie on; is there a scratch post in the run? All of these features will make your cat feel much happier.
- Take particular note of the other cats in the cattery, do they look happy and content?
- If the establishment also runs a dog kennels, are the dogs far enough away so they do not worry or disturb the cats? This can be a real issue if your cat is uncomfortable around dogs.
- You should also make a note of how clean and well-stocked the kitchen area is and if there is a chart for each cat's dietary requirements.
- Are the staff happy to answer all your questions and do they ask you questions? This is important if they are going to enable your cat to settle in and be happy for the duration of the stay. Ask lots of questions.
- How often do the cats get human contact or time to play with the staff? This is particularly important if your cat is used to a lot of human company at home.
- What are the cats fed? The cattery should be prepared to feed the food you supply; your cat will feel more at home and will be less likely to get an upset stomach if his diet remains unchanged.
- Is a bed and bedding provided? You may want to ask if your cat can have its own basket/bedding from home to help them feel more at home.
- Are the cats allowed to have their own toys? Again, this will make your dog feel more at home.
- Can the living quarters be heated? This will be especially important if your cat is going to be in the cattery in the wintertime.
- How many staff are there, and are they fully qualified? This will make a difference to the amount of time spent with each cat.
- Are all cats required to have up-to-date vaccinations? This is essential; no cat should be allowed into

Leaving your pet behind



a cattery unless it is fully vaccinated.

The cattery staff should also ask you questions so they can get to know your cat, if they don't then be wary. Things they should ask you.

- If your cat's vaccinations are up-to-date and ask to see it's vaccination record, plus a medical history.
- Information about your cat, for example, name, age, diet, special requirement, likes and dislikes.
- Details of your regular vet and contact details of any friends or family that they can get in touch with in an emergency.

When you have chosen your favourite boarding cattery, why not try your cat in the cattery for a short-stay period (maybe over a weekend) to see how your cat gets on before committing to a longer stay. When you have made your final decision, make sure you book well in advance, a popular cattery will fill up quickly.

The Feline Advisory Bureau (FAB) inspects catteries across the country; each cattery is measured against the FAB Standard for Construction and Management of Boarding Catteries. FAB has a listing of approved catteries on it's website - www.fabcats.org/fab_listed_catteries.html. You should also be able find a list of licensed premises from the Yellow Pages, cat magazines, local newspapers, veterinary surgeries, local authorities and pet shops, however the ultimate choice of cattery will be yours.

Why do catteries ask for vaccinations?

There is an increased risk of cats coming into contact with infectious diseases in a cattery (because they are kept close to lots of other cats). For this reason it is very important that your cat's routine vaccinations are up to date before they go to stay in a cattery. A good cattery will ask to see a vaccination certificate signed by your vet to state that your cat is fully protected against flu and feline infectious enteritis (a highly contagious disease) and sometimes chlamydia and feline leukaemia, but these are not absolutely necessary.

Where can I find a pet-sitter?

If you would prefer not to leave your cat in a boarding cattery you could ask a friend or a member of your family to look after your cat while you go on holiday. If they have a cat, you could then offer to look after theirs when they go on holiday. This type of pet care/share scheme is the best way of avoiding your cat from becoming stressed and you'll be at ease knowing your cat is in the best hands while you are away.

There are also companies that offer pet-sitting services for people when they go away on holiday. This involves someone coming to your house to feed and water your cat while you are away; good pet-sitting services will also take time out for playtime and cuddles! It can be less stressful for your cat than putting him into a cattery, but the person looking after your cat will still be a stranger and you must ensure the company you choose is registered, has good references, is reliable and responsible.

My cat has medication; what can I do?

If your pet is in generally good health but requires routine medication (painkillers for arthritis or even insulin injections for diabetes) you need to take special care in choosing a career. Many catteries and registered pet-sitters will still be happy to care for your pet and give treatment as required. You should always make sure that they know all about your pet's medical history and can contact your own vet if necessary when you are away.

If your pet has very special needs your vet may be able to advise on whether it is wise to leave them with someone else. Some vets also have boarding facilities and may be able to arrange to care for your pet themselves if they require a very high level of medical care.

If you want any other information on health issues concerning your cat please contact Hampden Veterinary Hospital on 01296 423666 and we will be happy to advise you.