

BOARDING YOUR GERIATRIC OR SPECIAL NEEDS PET

Boarding, especially if your pet has never been boarded or boarded infrequently, may cause underlying conditions to become apparent or worsen. Pets, who board frequently at the same facility, however, quickly become accustomed to the “routine” of that pet care facility. The stress may become less at each visit.

When older pets or pets with special needs such as diabetes, epilepsy, blindness, deafness, arthritis, recovering from recent surgery, or other physical disability are boarded, their bodies are subjected to additional stress due to removal from their normal home environment. Dogs and cats love “routine,” they are most comfortable when they know what is going to happen when.

As geriatric pets are more likely to have underlying health problems, the stress of being away from home and change in their routine has the potential to cause these underlying physical conditions, such as heart, liver, and kidney disorders, to become more active, and potentially life-threatening. In short, special needs pets conditions may become exacerbated due to stress. A close watch of their eating habits and medication needs will be required.

Your IBPSA member pet care provider is devoted to your pet’s well-being. Look for the IBPSA membership certificate proudly displayed.

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IBPSA and our members...



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IBPSA PRESENTS
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

BOARDING GERIATRIC OR SPECIAL NEEDS PETS



CARING FOR OLDER OR SPECIAL NEEDS PETS

Most pet care facilities have accommodations and procedures in place to help your pet cope with their specific needs and stress. Often these pets can be provided with additional attention, extra bedding, soft music, or a special boarding area away from the general pet population. Special care may need to be taken when handling or feeding the pet as well. If they are on a special diet, you may be asked to bring their food to ensure there's one less change in their environment and that their nutritional needs are met the same as they are at home.

Be certain to discuss your pet's individual needs and health conditions as well as what to do if something changes with them, in advance of boarding them. An emergency contact number is very important so your pet care provider is able to reach you or someone who can make decisions for you. Provide your veterinarian's contact as well.

Your IBPSA pet care provider is in the business of boarding because of their love of animals. They want to be prepared for these situations.

PLANNING TO BOARD

Speak with your pet care provider and staff regarding the care of your geriatric or special needs pet to be certain they are prepared to care for your pet. Be honest about any known medical condition your pet may have so the staff knows what to look for and is better able to recognize problems with a particular condition.

Take along all medications your pet may need during the stay. Be sure they are all labeled appropriately. If your dog or cat is on several medications or a complicated dosage schedule, a small chart or calendar showing the medication schedule may help staff to keep the treatments on time. Bring your insulin needles or other measuring devices for liquid medications to ensure that all measurements are the same as at home.

STRESS AND YOUR PET'S HEALTH

If the boarding facility must seek veterinary care for your pets, be aware that you, as the owner, are financially responsible for your pet's treatment. But how could my senior pet become ill or my special needs pet go into a medical crisis? He was fine when I left him! Many older pets have underlying conditions or undiagnosed illnesses that are not readily apparent. The stress of being away from home and out of your pet's regular routine can cause a medical condition to flare up.

Stress can be caused by a variety of factors including being away from home and loved ones, a new environment, other dogs and cats, new noises, different smells, the people associated with a pet care facility, a change in food or water...the list goes on. Whatever triggers a stress reaction also triggers physical changes in your pet.

The pituitary gland releases a hormone called ACTH into the bloodstream, which in turn signals the adrenal glands to release epinephrine and other natural steroids. Each of these serves to get the body ready to react (the old "fight or flight" pattern).

Stress-induced hormones have effects on various body systems such as increased blood pressure forcing the the heart has to work harder, a slowdown of kidney and urinary systems, and a temporary shutdown of the immune system, which fights off disease and infections. Exhibited physical signs may include vomiting, diarrhea, lack of appetite, lethargy, or increased respiration.

Stress helps animals (and people) cope with a situation. However, when stress is not relieved or reduced sufficiently, the body does not have a chance to rest and cleanse itself of the excessive hormones. The possibility of shut down or failure of one or more body systems becomes greater as the stress continues, especially if there is any underlying or previous disease. Since the immune system stops working, even bacteria or viruses that might not normally affect your pet can now cause illness. This is why your pet can become ill away from home, even when he or she appeared normal when you dropped them off.

“BUT THE BOARDING FACILITY MUST HAVE MADE HIM SICK!”

Your IBPSA pet care provider wants boarding to be a pleasant experience for you and your pet. They work hard to deliver the care that is needed. However, because our pets are living, loving, breathing beings, there are times when things happen within them physically that are not in the control of the pet care provider. Your pet care provider is responsible for providing a clean, safe and caring environment and monitoring the health of the pets left in their care. Unfortunately, a boarding facility has no way of preventing a pet from becoming ill from the effects of stress.

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