



# HOW TO SELECT A PET CARE FACILITY

## THE PET OWNER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL BOARDING AND DAYCARE

### Introduction

---

Every day people face the question of what to do with their pets when travel, illness, or family emergencies disrupt normal care. Others feel that it is important to provide positive social environments for their dogs while they are at work or away for the day. Some pet owners take their pets with them when they travel, only to discover that hotel restrictions, travel-induced pet illness, or runaway pets can turn their trip into a disaster. Other pet owners turn over the care of their animals to well-meaning but untrained neighbors or friends while they are at work or on vacation. Again, the results are often unsatisfactory. Pets entrusted to such part-time custodians frequently escape or become seriously ill due to a lack of reliable, frequent and knowledgeable supervision.

Fortunately, the majority of pet owners who find themselves in need of pet care utilize the services of professional pet care facilities. Millions of pet owners recognize that full-time, knowledgeable and experienced pet care facility operators provide the most dependable, secure and safe pet care available. In addition to traditional boarding services, pet owners now have more options than ever since dog daycares provide monitored and controlled environments in which groups of friendly dogs from multiple families can interact and play throughout the day in enclosed buildings or yards.

Because competent, ethical pet care facilities are an important part of your pet care program and because the selection of a facility can be a confusing and disconcerting process for pet owners, ABKA, the trade association for pet care professionals since 1977, has published this booklet to assist you in evaluating, selecting and working with your local pet care facility.

Our goals are twofold:

- To give your pet a happy and safe boarding or daycare experience, and
- To enable you to enjoy your time away from home content that your pet is receiving the best care possible.

## What is a Pet Care Facility?

---

Pet boarding and daycare facilities are businesses designed and operated specifically to care for pets, as distinguished from breeding facilities, which are devoted to producing puppies; training facilities, which take in dogs for hunting, protection and other types of specialized training; and veterinary hospitals, which are designed to care for sick and injured animals. Most pet care facilities provide a variety of pet services such as boarding, daycare, grooming, obedience training classes, pet supply sales and pet shipping. Although the vast majority of boarded pets are dogs and cats, many facilities also offer boarding for horses, birds, reptiles and other exotic pets.

## What is ABKA?

---

A characteristic common to all professional pet care providers is a deep love and respect for animals. This is their basic motivation for establishing their businesses. In 1977, however, a dedicated group of boarding facility operators recognized that the love of animals, by itself, was not enough to guarantee the development of professional standards of pet care within the industry. Also needed were educational opportunities for pet care professionals, to enable them to stay abreast of developments in pet care, and some method of establishing and promoting a high level of ethical conduct within the industry. To achieve these goals, these concerned boarding facility operators founded ABKA.

Today, ABKA has a membership of approximately 3,000 pet care providers throughout the U.S. and abroad. By means of its publications, conventions, seminars, regional meetings, ethics program, certification program for pet care facility operators, accreditation program for facilities, and industry committees the association helps members to develop and maintain the highest professional business standards. This, in turn, enables ABKA members to offer you, the pet owner, the most knowledgeable, ethical pet care available anywhere.

## Cooperative Effort

---

The goals of ABKA member facilities are happy, healthy pets and satisfied pet owners. This requires a cooperative effort from both facility owner and pet owner. In the following pages, the ABKA, in response to numerous requests from pet owners, lists the features you should look for when selecting your pet care facility. You will also find suggestions for what you can do to ensure that your pet receives the best care possible. Let's start at the beginning:

## Finding Your Local Pet Care Facilities

---

There are several ways of locating the pet care facilities that are convenient to you:

- 1. The ABKA Online Pet Services Locator:** This convenient online service offers you a quick way to locate ABKA member pet care facilities in your area or at your travel destination. The locator allows you to search by country, state and city, as well as by type of service. Most listings include a direct link to each pet care provider's Web site so you can review the facilities and services. To access this service, visit [www.abka.com](http://www.abka.com) and click on "Pet Service Locator."

**2. The Internet:** The Internet is an extremely valuable resource for those who are seeking a pet care facility for the first time. Many boarding and daycare facilities take the anxiety out of the first visit through features offered on their Web sites. Many pet care facility Web sites offer virtual tours of the facility and the option to make boarding or daycare reservations online. Pet owners are also often able to download the boarding or daycare agreement, vaccination requirements, or other paperwork prior to coming to the facility.

**3. Yellow Pages:** In addition to the Web site, an ad in the Yellow Pages is often the primary method of a pet care facility's advertising. Remember, though, the size of the ad is no indication of quality.

**4. Recommendations of Friends:** Satisfied customers are the best recommendation that a pet care facility can receive. Ask your friends and neighbors about their experiences. Check with your veterinarian or ask the facility in question for references.

**5. Better Business Bureau:** If your community has a Better Business Bureau, a phone inquiry about your local pet care facility is appropriate. Ask about the reputation of a specific business and if any complaints have been lodged against them.

## **Evaluating a Pet Care Facility**

---

After finding your local pet care facilities, you can determine the one to use by:

**1. Telephoning the facility.** Call to see if the facility can accommodate your pet. During peak times such as the Christmas season and summer vacations, many facilities are booked up and cannot accept more pets. Also, because some pets require special handling or accommodations (very young puppies, animals on special medications or feeding schedules, or giant breeds, for example), all facilities may not be able to accept them. While you are on the phone, make an appointment to visit the facility.

**2. Making a personal visit to the facility.** A personal visit is essential in determining whether the facility will be satisfactory. During your visit, observe or ask about the following:

**a. Acceptance Policies:** Evaluate each facility's individual acceptance policy. Many daycare facilities have specific requirements regarding the size of the dog you wish to admit, spay/neuter policies, daycare enrollment paperwork and temperament testing procedures. Since enrollment space is often limited, many daycares will try to match your dog's personality with existing playgroups.

Some daycare facilities require standing reservations or regular weekly or monthly visits to ensure that the dog's social skills are maintained.

**b. General Appearance of the Facility Proper:** Following regular daily clean-up procedures, the facility should look (and smell) neat and clean.

Pet care providers are proud of their facilities and like to show them off, but some of them do not permit visitors in areas where animals are housed. There are two key reasons for establishing a "No Visitors" policy. First, some dogs react unpredictably to strangers and can become excessively fearful or aggressive. As a result, the presence of strangers in the facility can cause such dogs to injure themselves or develop intestinal problems. Second, visitors do not follow the same stringent disinfecting procedures used by staff members and can transport contagious agents such as bacteria

and viruses into the facility. These cautions aside, facilities with a “No Visitors” policy should provide you with some type of viewing window so you can see where your pet will be staying.

In visiting your local pet care facilities, you will observe that there are several types of designs currently in use. Some facilities have indoor/outdoor runs and play areas; some are totally enclosed; and some house pets inside but utilize outside exercise areas. Each of these designs has its own advantages and you should ask your pet care professional to explain the advantages of the system in place at that facility.

**c. Security:** When you are on a trip, your pet may decide to try to “find” you. Because of this tendency and because very few homes are designed with pet security in mind, pets can escape from inexperienced individuals you may have asked to watch your pet. Boarding and daycare facilities, on the other hand, are designed to prevent this type of accident. During your facility visit, look for sturdy, well-maintained fencing, gates and dividers between runs. If your dog is a climber, digger or some other type of “escape artist,” tell the facility operator so that extra precautions, such as wire-covered runs or locks on gates, can be taken. Cats always require covered facilities.

Dog daycares should have very strict security measures in place. Look for at least two doors between the off-lead playroom and any outside area. Observe fencing height and security in all outdoor play yards. You should notify daycare operators if your dog is a jumper so they can ensure proper indoor and outdoor safety is maintained for your pet.

**d. Safety:** Areas where your pet will stay should be free of sharp objects, harmful chemicals and objects your pet may swallow. Primary enclosures such as sleeping quarters should provide solid dividers between your pet and the other boarders, both for safety reasons and so that your pet will be relaxed enough to sleep without feeling challenged by his or her neighbors. Exercise areas should include barriers between runs high enough to prevent male dogs from urinating into adjacent runs. Surfaces should offer good traction even when wet. Firefighting equipment should be readily available.

In daycare facilities, make sure you understand the temperament testing process. Note “time-out” areas available off of playrooms. Ask about the facility’s toy policy and make sure dogs are tested for toy aggressiveness if toys are used. Ask about collar policies as prong or metal collars should not be allowed into daycares. If collars are left on dogs in daycare, facility operators should have emergency plans and cutting tools in place so they are able to react quickly if collars are caught during play.

If a daycare facility does not allow standard collars, appropriate identification tools such as paper or breakaway collars should be provided. In collarless facilities, check for multiple gates to minimize the risk of escape.

**e. Supervision:** Proper supervision is the key to a good facility. Pets should be checked frequently during the day by someone who is trained to recognize the signs of illness and distress. Experience and practical knowledge are required to detect or interpret such symptoms as lethargy (“I thought he was just sleeping”), severe intestinal disorders (friends or acquaintances rarely check the backyard for bloody stool), urinary problems (it is almost impossible to detect blood in the urine when a pet urinates on grass), loss of appetite, coughing, sneezing or discharge from the eyes or nose. All of these signs can be significant. Competent pet care personnel are trained to recognize and evaluate such signs and to seek veterinary assistance when needed. Therefore, you should try to evaluate the competence of the facility’s personnel.

At daycare facilities, staff must have a constant physical presence supervising dogs in playrooms. Daycare facility operators and staff should have training or a background in dog behavior. It

is recommended that there be one staff person for every 15 dogs; however, group make-up may reduce safety levels to one staff person for every 10 dogs or increase safety levels to one staff person for every 20 dogs. While this is acceptable, make sure that management is able to explain staffing ratios and policies.

One good indication that the business operator is keeping abreast of the latest developments in pet care is his or her ABKA membership. Check for a current ABKA membership certificate on the office wall. If your facility operator has been awarded the CKO (Certified Kennel Operator) designation by ABKA, it means that his or her competence and ethical fitness have been acknowledged publicly by the association. If the CKO plaque has been awarded, it will be displayed proudly along with the ABKA membership certificate. Accredited facilities will display a blue ribbon which attests to the fact that the facility has been inspected and accredited by ABKA and has met over 200 standards of excellence.

**f. Playgroups and Playroom Sizes in Daycare Facilities:** When dogs of various sizes are admitted to a daycare facility, policies should be in place to segregate the dogs by play style and size. Separate playrooms should be established for different-sized dogs and different group behaviors. Alternatively, some facilities have very large playrooms with multiple staff members present at all times to monitor play.

Playroom sizes should average 75 square feet per dog. Smaller dog areas require less space and large, active playgroups may require more space.

**g. Sanitation:** The facility should be free of dirt, fecal accumulation, odors and parasite infestation (including flies, fleas and ticks). There should be a strict schedule of disinfecting with effective chemicals. Daycare “potty” areas should be well-maintained and without discernable odor. Solid waste should be removed immediately and there should be a disinfecting process in place for urine.

Note: Since 1978, there have been worldwide outbreaks of an intestinal disease called canine parvovirus. This disease is spread when dogs come into contact with a contaminated surface (clothing, shoes, grass or carpeting). New vaccines are now available to combat this disease, but until the dog population develops immunity to the disease, it will remain a potential problem.

Several professional disinfectants, including bleach at a 1:30 solution, are effective against parvovirus. Therefore, if there have been any reports of parvovirus disease in your area, your facility should be using one of these products for routine disinfecting. The facility should also require immunizations. (Surveys of facilities using the sodium hypochloride 1:30 solution during localized break-outs in 1980 and 1981 demonstrated that the spread of parvovirus could be controlled in a pet care facility even when pets in the area that are not boarded and do not attend daycare are contracting the disease. This suggests that during a parvovirus outbreak, your dog might actually be safer in a properly-maintained facility than at home.

**h. Health Care:** Inquire about the following:

1. *Water:* At boarding facilities, individual containers filled with clean drinking water should be available to each animal. At daycare facilities, water should be available to all playgroups at all times. Water should be checked and changed frequently and all containers should be disinfected at least once daily.

2. *Food:* Feeding procedures vary in each pet care facility. Some facilities supply preferred brands of food, which they serve to all boarders; however, they usually allow you to bring your pet’s favorite food if you wish. Other facilities maintain a stock of the most popular brands and feed whatever you request. Still others require that you bring your pet’s food with you when you

check in. Determining the business's policy and if there are any additional charges for special feeding arrangements.

3. *Veterinary Services:* Ask about the procedure for obtaining veterinary service, if required. Some pet care facilities retain a veterinarian on the premises. Others prefer to use your pet's veterinarian so that there will be a continuity of care. Remember that it is customary for you to be financially responsible for any veterinary care required for your pet while being boarded.

4. *Immunization Requirements:* Dogs should be immunized against rabies, distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, parvovirus (DHLPP), and bordetella. Cats should be vaccinated against rabies, panleukopenia or distemper, feline rhinotracheitis, calici virus and pneumonitis (FVRCP).

5. *Medication Policies and Procedures:* If your pet is taking medication, advise the business operator of the nature of the problem. Many facilities will not accept animals requiring excessive medication (more than three times per day, or nighttime medication, for example) or animals requiring potentially dangerous medication (diabetes shots, for example).

Remember, it is essential that heartworm preventative medicine be continued during your pet's stay at the facility. Before dropping your pet off, inquire whether the facility provides such medication or if you should bring a supply. Ask if there is an additional charge for administering the medication.

If your pet is attending daycare, remember that certain health or physical conditions may not be appropriate in a social daycare environment or playgroup. If your pet has any health conditions, please discuss them with the daycare operator prior to enrollment. This will ensure that the condition can be safely managed at the facility.

6. *Parasite Control:* If you live in an area in which fleas and/or ticks are a problem, your pet care facility should utilize procedures for controlling these parasites (pre-entry examinations for boarders, sprays or dips). If you are bringing your pet's flea treatment to the boarding or daycare facility, make sure that the owner or operator knows which flea control program you are using and ask if they will administer the treatment while your pet is in their care. Inquire about extra charges for administering parasite control.

#### **i. Provision for Animal Comfort:**

1. *Temperature Control:* The facility should be able to maintain temperatures within healthful, comfortable limits for your pet. If you have an older pet or a pet that requires warmer or cooler accommodations than are normally provided, determine if special arrangements can be made.

2. *Protection from the Elements:* In all types of pet care facilities, exercise areas should provide shelter from wind, rain, snow and direct sunlight. At a daycare facility, outdoor activities and exposure should be limited when conditions are extreme. Check for shade and shelter, which should always be provided in extremely hot or cold environments.

3. *Ventilation:* Good ventilation (no drafts) helps minimize the spread of airborne bacteria and viruses.

4. *Light:* Lighting should be at comfortable levels during the day.

5. *Bedding*: Find out what arrangements are made for pet bedding. Some facilities provide resting platforms, bedding or newspaper. Others require that you bring bedding from home. Check if there are any restrictions on owner-provided bedding (wicker beds and feather pillows, for example, may not be accepted).

6. *Sleeping Quarters*: As you know from observing your pet, most of his or her time is spent resting or sleeping. Your facility should provide a place for this purpose (a primary enclosure). It should be clean and dry and roomy enough for your pet to stand up comfortably, turn around easily, and stretch out.

7. *Exercise Area*: All animals require exercise, but the requirements for dogs and cats are different. Let's discuss their requirements for exercise individually:

**Dogs:** Dogs should have enough space to enable them to break into a run. Exercise time will depend upon the facility's layout. In some facilities, dogs are allowed free access to their own individual exercise runs during the day. In such facilities, you may want to make arrangements to limit your dog's exercise time if there is any reason he or she should not be allowed to exercise at will (an older dog with a heart condition or a "hyper" dog that tends to run weight off, for example). Other facilities use a "time-sharing" method for scheduling exercise. In such facilities, make sure that the time allowed and the frequency of exercise periods are adequate for your dog.

**Cats:** Because cats exercise isometrically (by stretching), and because they are not pack animals that need, or enjoy, the company of other animals (as dogs do), they do not necessarily require separate exercise areas, but are content when housed in roomy primary enclosures. However, some facilities also provide play areas for those cats that appear to enjoy the additional space. Whether or not your facility provides such play areas, your cat's primary enclosure should be large enough to permit stretching and moving around and should contain a regularly cleaned litter box.

8. *Additional Services*: Many pet owners find it convenient to schedule grooming, bathing or training for their pets while they are already in the facility. Ask if such services are available. If you are in the process of moving, the facility may even be able to take care of shipping your pet.

Such a service can save you time and trouble and helps to ensure the safety of your pet.

**j. Business Procedures:** As a customer, you are entitled to be treated in a friendly, professional manner. Furthermore, a facility's customer-handling practices are a reflection of their awareness of their responsibilities to you, the customer, and to themselves as professionals. Therefore, you should observe the following:

1. *Personnel*: Work in a pet care facility is physically demanding and difficult. Nevertheless, personnel should appear clean and neat. They should also demonstrate a high level of understanding and concern for your pet through their questions, their animal handling techniques, and their attitudes.

2. *Appearance of Facility Grounds and Office*: All property should be neat and well-maintained.

3. *Rates*: Rates should be easily available. Be sure that you understand the method of calculating charges. Some facilities have a checkout time after which you are charged for an additional day.

Others charge by the night or day. Daycare facilities often offer half-day rates. If you are dropping your pet off for a half-day stay, be sure you understand the facility's drop-off and pickup time requirements.

Many daycare facilities are unable to board pets overnight, so ensure that pick-up times fit into your daily schedule. Make sure you understand any and all late charge policies in daycare facilities that do not offer overnight stays.

*4. Agreement or Contract:* There should be some type of agreement which clearly states pet owner's rights and the pet care facility's responsibilities. This type of form protects both you and the facility from any misunderstandings in these areas.

*5. Hours of Operation:* Days and hours of business should be clearly posted. If your facility is closed on weekends or holidays, note and respect that policy. On those days, all pets are fed and exercised and the facilities are cleaned and maintained but the facility office is closed and there is no one there to meet customers.

*6. ABKA Membership Certificate:* Your pet care facility's membership in ABKA is a public commitment to ethical practices and your assurance that the facility is subject to the ABKA Ethics Program. As a pet owner patronizing an ABKA facility, you can also call on ABKA for information and assistance should you experience a problem with a member. If the facility also displays an ABKA accreditation ribbon, you are assured that they have met the stringent standards of the Voluntary Facilities Accreditation (VFA) Program which inspects over 200 areas of facility operation. The ABKA Code of Ethics and the Bill of Rights for Pets in Boarding or Daycare Facilities should also be posted in your facility's office, for your inspection. It is a public statement of the standards by which your pet care facility should be judged.

Using the information presented, you have now located, evaluated and selected your pet care facility, thereby completing most of the steps necessary for a successful boarding or daycare experience. However, there is still one thing required to assure that your pet receives the best care possible—and that is that you fulfill your obligations. Even the best facility in the world cannot take proper care of your pet unless you assist them by observing the following recommendations:

## **Preparing for Boarding or Daycare**

---

**1. Make your reservations early:** Most boarding facilities are booked up on holidays and during vacation times. If you wait until the last minute to make your reservations, you may be disappointed. As you make your reservations, verify those items which you should bring with you to the facility, such as immunization records, special food, medication, bedding and toys. Make arrangements for any special services that you wish to have performed while your pet is at the facility, such as grooming, training or shipping. As you make your reservations, find out what type of payment arrangements are acceptable (credit cards, cash, personal checks, money orders).

**2. Prepare your pet for boarding:** Remember that pets, like people, usually appreciate a vacation in new surroundings with new friends. Dogs, once they become familiar with their new surroundings, have a marvelous, exciting time—almost like kids at summer camp. (If your dog has never been boarded before, you might consider short, overnight stays at the facility prior to an extended boarding stay to help him or her get used to boarding. Every time you return, your dog is less likely to be affected by separation anxiety and can enjoy the experience more). As a rule, kittens take to boarding easily

and have a wonderful time. Adult cats usually display a very nonchalant attitude towards boarding and prefer to sit quietly and observe the daily facility routine. They don't seem inclined to make new feline friends or participate in group play, but are content to rest, eat, make friends with the help and purr.

**3. Prepare your pet for daycare:** It is a good idea to socialize puppies early by keeping their litters intact as long as possible. If this is not an option, participating in supervised social programs operated by personnel with a good understanding of dog behavior is often beneficial.

Before boarding or attending daycare for the first time, make sure that all immunizations are current and have your immunization records on hand if your facility requires them. Keep in mind that many boarding and daycare facilities require that pets are spayed or neutered. Make sure you know and understand your pet care facility's policies on intact pets.

Don't overfeed your pet the night before he or she goes to the boarding or daycare facility. The extra food is not really necessary and the result might be an upset stomach.

Finally, because pets sense and reflect our emotions, DO NOT allow any member of the family to stage an emotional "farewell" scene. Your pets can be made to feel unnecessarily anxious about the facility visit if they are subjected to this kind of dramatic display.

**4. Check in during normal business hours:** Bring all agreed-upon medications and make sure that medications list the prescription number and the name of your pharmacy so the facility can obtain a refill if your return is unexpectedly delayed. Allow enough time in the office to fill out the necessary paperwork. Your pet care provider needs to know such things as: name, address, phone number, return date, additional services requested, where you can be reached in case of an emergency, the name of a local contact, your veterinarian's name and phone number, special feeding instructions (if any) and medication instructions. If your pet has any special problems which are not covered on the check-in forms—such as fear of thunder, epilepsy or deafness—point them out to the staff.

All of this information helps your pet care provider take better care of your pet, especially if there is any type of emergency requiring special action. Remember: This is what professional care is all about. Anyone can feed your pet, as long as nothing goes wrong, but what you want for our pet is supervision by someone who can assess and respond properly to emergencies.

Don't be surprised if your pet care facility operator asks you to leave your dog in the office rather than allowing you to place your dog in his run. This is done so that your dog will see you leave and will realize that you have entrusted him or her to the care of the facility staff. It also eliminates the possibility of your dog getting the erroneous impression that you are placing him in the run to "guard" it. When dogs get that impression, they sometimes become aggressive.

**5. Relax and enjoy your trip:** Remember that you are leaving your pet in the hands of capable professionals. Pets in the facility probably receive more care and attention than they would at home.

## Picking Up Your Pet

---

Whether you pick up your pet after an extended stay at a boarding facility or after just a few hours at a daycare, there are some things you can do to make the homecoming a happy one for both you and your pet:

**1. Pick up your pet during normal business hours:** Attempting to conduct business after hours is

not only an imposition on the facility staff and a possible disruption of sleep for the boarding animals, but can also result in a wasted trip to the facility (because all personnel may be working in the boarding or playgroup areas and unable to hear the doorbell). Daycare facilities often close for an hour or two in the middle of the day so that dogs are able to nap. For these reasons, many pet care facilities assess an additional charge for after-hours pickup in an effort to discourage the practice.

**2. Ask about your pet's stay at the facility:** Did your pet adapt well to facility food, routine and environment? Did he or she display any unusual behavior or require any special handling? This information will be recorded and kept on file to assist facility personnel in caring for your pet during the next stay, but you should also be aware of it in the event that you move or use the services of another pet care facility in the future.

Many daycare facilities provide first day and/or periodic report cards. If you do not receive a written report, ask how your pets played and if they enjoyed their day. Daycare operators should openly discuss any concerns they have with your dog's behavior. If any problems are observed, the facility operator may suggest training that will aid your dog in developing and retaining polite dog social skills.

**3. Do not feed or water your dog for at least four hours after returning home:** Cats adapt to their return home with the same easy acceptance with which they adapt to boarding, but dogs can become very excited when you return to pick them up. When dogs become excited, they tend to gulp their food and water. Unfortunately, owners who allow their dogs unlimited access to either food or water immediately after returning home will frequently trigger vomiting and/or diarrhea. If your dog appears to be thirsty, provide a few ice cubes rather than water. Let him or her calm down for about four hours before offering food.

**4. Check for sore feet and allow your pet to rest and recuperate:** After a long day of play at a daycare, your dog's muscles and joints may be sore or your dog's pads may become tender. Sore pads are common when a dog begins attending daycare. The tenderness is often the result of your dog adjusting to different surface materials used in the facility. This is often a short-term issue that resolves on its own but pet owners should keep it in mind and allow your dog adequate time to rest.

**5. Contact your pet care provider if you have any questions about your pet's behavior after returning home:** Sometimes, pet owners become unnecessarily concerned about completely normal behavior. For example, many dogs are not used to the level of activity provided by daycare and tend to sleep almost continuously for a day or two after returning home. This is usually the result of being back in a relatively calm environment after the excitement of being at the facility. Dogs that have been boarded also tend to sleep more than usual for a few days upon their return home. However, if you observe anything that appears to be out of the ordinary, contact the pet care provider to discuss your observations. Your ABKA facility operator wants you to understand the boarding or daycare process and your pet's reaction to it and will be happy to discuss any questions you might have.

## **Conclusion**

---

ABKA members have an investment in their profession. Through their participation in the educational programs of their association, they advance their knowledge and skills. Through their participation in ABKA's ethics program, they demonstrate their commitment to high-quality, ethical pet care. To

you, the pet owner, this is your assurance that your pet's time away from you will be as safe and enjoyable as possible.

Your ABKA member is an integral part of your pet care team, which includes your pet, your veterinarian, your pet care facility, and you. ABKA members invite you to stop by for a visit. They would like to get acquainted with you and your pet and they would be pleased to explain their services to you. They are proud of their facilities and of ABKA, their trade association, which serves the pet services industry through education, encouragement and example.

Developing a good relationship with a pet care facility will make things a lot easier for your pet, your family and you. Following the advice listed in this booklet will result in a pleasurable (and economical) experience with a pet care facility for both you and your pet. Do your homework in advance and trust your pet care provider to ensure a safe, happy homecoming when you return.

*See the ABKA Bill of Rights for Pets in Boarding or Daycare Facilities and Code of Ethics on the following pages.*

## **A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR PETS IN BOARDING OR DAYCARE FACILITIES**

As a member of ABKA, this facility freely acknowledges and willingly accepts the serious responsibility involved in the care of your beloved pets. As a part of that responsibility, we maintain membership in ABKA and are committed to operate our business in accordance with the ABKA code of ethical conduct. Implicit in that code are the following pledges:

### **Our Pledge to Your Pet**

1. We will care for all pets with kindness and will place their welfare above all other business considerations.
2. We will provide Security and Safety for all pets in our care by means of proper facility design, good screening and handling procedures, and by keeping all pet areas free of potential hazards.
3. We will maintain a sanitary environment for all pets in our care.
4. We will provide vigilant supervision of all pets by competent, conscientious personnel and will respond appropriately to any sign of inappropriate behavior, distress or emergency.
5. We will provide individual water containers and clean water to boarded pets and maintain clean containers of water available for all daycare dogs throughout the day.
6. We will ensure an adequate and proper diet is provided to each pet per facility policy.
7. We will seek veterinary assistance whenever appropriate. The choice of veterinarian will be governed by individual facility policy, as explained during admission and/or enrollment.
8. We will require proper immunizations for all pets, as specified in our admission/enrollment procedures.
9. We will administer owner-provided or veterinary-prescribed medication in accordance with instructions.
10. We will take appropriate measures to control parasites within the facility environment.
11. We will maintain facility temperatures within healthful limits, and will take appropriate precautions to protect boarded pets with special temperature requirements.
12. We will provide protection from the elements and from excessive exposure to the sun, heat and cold for all pets.
13. We will provide adequate ventilation to minimize possible exposure to harmful bacteria or viruses.
14. We will provide comfortable levels of light in all pet areas.
15. We will provide individual sleeping areas for boarded pets, and private areas for daycare dogs when separation from the playgroup is necessary, all of which are large enough to accommodate normal postural movements.
16. We will provide adequate exercise and play areas, which are safe, clean and large enough for each pet to exercise and/or play properly and safely.

### **Our Pledge to You**

1. We will deal honestly, fairly, and respectfully with the public, and will put the welfare of pets in our care and service to our customers above personal gain.
2. We will honor our commitments to our customers, whether they are made in our advertising, or in person, and will avoid inaccurate or misleading claims about the care which we provide.

3. We will respect the confidential nature of our business/client relationship, and will not release client information to unauthorized individuals.
4. We will strive to maintain and advance the professional competence of our staff by taking advantage of the educational opportunities available to us.
5. We will endeavor to resolve any disputes which might arise in a fair, amicable and professional manner.

## **ABKA CODE OF ETHICS**

*All ABKA members subscribe to and are governed by the following Code of Ethics. The ABKA Ethics Committee enforces this code and encourages inquiries should these standards not be met by a member.*

As a member of ABKA, I recognize that, in order to fulfill my obligations to the animals in my care, to my customers, to the pet care services industry and to my community, both my business and my personal life must be governed by honorable standards... *Therefore I solemnly pledge:*

1. To provide conscientious care for the animals entrusted to me, being constantly attentive to their security, safety, and well-being, and to place their welfare above all other business considerations.
2. To take every opportunity to learn more about my profession and to improve my services.
3. To deal honestly and fairly with the public, and to avoid misrepresentation of my services.
4. To respect the confidence of every customer served.
5. To place service to my customers and to the pet care services industry above personal gain.
6. To avoid unfair competitive practices, any slander or defamation of my competitors, and actions or business practices which would result in dishonor upon or distrust of my competitors or of the pet care services industry in general.
7. To support my association, its policies and programs, and to participate as fully as possible in its activities.
8. To be respectful of, and to cooperate with the other professions and trades which operate within the pet industry, in every way consistent with my other responsibilities.
9. To obey all applicable Federal, State and local laws governing animal care and business practices.
10. To operate my business in such a manner as to reflect honor upon the pet care services industry within my local community.
11. To encourage responsible pet ownership, and to promote, especially through the charitable programs of ABKA, an increased awareness and acceptance of humane and noble animal programs.

**If at any time you should feel that we have not lived up to these commitments, we sincerely urge you to bring the matter to our attention, or to the attention of the ABKA Ethics Committee at:**

**1702 E. Pikes Peak Ave. Colorado Springs, CO 80909  
Toll Free: 877-570-7788 / Local: 719-667-1600 / Fax: 719-667-0116 / Email: [membership@abka.com](mailto:membership@abka.com)**