



When you are going away or need a temporary place for your pet to stay, finding the right boarding kennel or pet sitter is important. Below are some tips to help you evaluate service providers and find the best fit for your pet.

There are many options, but it's essential to remember these professions are currently unregulated. While some providers join professional organizations and commit to a code of conduct, this is not required.

Consider Humane Care and Training

At the Edmonton Humane Society, we support humane methods of training and care. This means using positive methods like treats, toys and praise to encourage the behaviours we want in our pets, and redirecting or ignoring the behaviours we don't want, rather than using aversive methods like fear or pain to stop unwanted behaviours. When choosing a caregiver, look for individuals who align with and promote these positive methods to ensure your pet will be in the care of someone who uses humane approaches that prioritize your pet's welfare.

Boarding Facilities vs Pet Sitters

Boarding facilities and pet sitters offer different types of care environments for your pet. Here's a quick comparison to help you decide which might be a better fit:

	Boarding Facility	Pet Sitter
Location	A dedicated building for boarding pets, often combined with services like doggy daycare	Your home or the pet sitter's home
Staff	Generally have multiple staff, though not always available overnight	Typically one person, but may be multiple, with possible overnight supervision
Other Animals	May house multiple species and pets may be housed individually or in shared spaces	Your pet(s) may be the only one, or they may interact with other animals in the sitter's care

Questions to Ask Yourself First

Before choosing a service, consider your pet's personality and preferences:

- Does your pet feel comfortable around new people and animals?
- How do they react to changes in their environment or routine?
- Would your pet prefer staying at home or are they comfortable with travel and could adapt well to a boarding facility?

Some pets do better with the familiarity of their own home and fewer people, while others get excited by new places and people.



Questions to Ask Potential Service Providers

While there are no regulations for pet sitters and boarding facilities, there are questions you can ask to ensure your pet will be well cared for:

Is there an initial assessment required and what does that look like?

Providers should have questions for you about your pet and may want to meet your pet or have a trial run to assess compatibility. Providers should ask about your pet's health, vaccinations and spay/neuter status, personality, sociability with other animals, what kind of environment they like, and their past experiences with pet sitters or boarding kennels. Answer honestly so that the provider can use the best management strategies for your pet.

What are the vaccination and spay/neuter requirements?

Most providers require animals to be up-to-date on vaccinations and to be spayed/neutered past a certain age. This is important to prevent the spread of disease from other animals they may be caring for. Have your vet records available and make sure they're up to date on any vaccines or treatments.

Do they have policies or a contract for you to sign?

Understand their policies related to emergency care, payment, picking up animals, and how any issues will be communicated. Ensure you are comfortable with these policies.

When and how often can you expect communication?

Some providers may provide daily updates over e-mail or an app, while others may provide less frequent updates. Find out how frequently you'll be updated and how they'll communicate if something happens to your pet, like an injury or concerning behaviour.

Do they hold any necessary licenses and insurance?

Pet boarding facilities in Edmonton require a business license, however pet sitters may not. While some pet sitters work for companies, others are independent and pet sit casually or through an online platform.

If the provider offers services through a company or platform, they should have insurance and policies in place. If they are independent, they may not have insurance or policies. Evaluate the level of formality, insurance and risk that you are comfortable with.

Are they comfortable with meeting your pet's needs?

If your pet requires medication, special care or other accommodations - like being walked alone at quiet times to reduce reactivity - is the provider understanding and comfortable doing this? Discuss if there will be added fees associated with this care.

Where will your pet stay?



Ask to see the spaces your pet will be in and where they'll sleep. Ensure it is clean, safe, escape-proof, an appropriate temperature, and has enough room to rest, eat, move around and go to the bathroom comfortably. If your pet uses a litterbox ensure there are enough provided, and that they're in places your pet will go.

How do they handle caring for multiple animals?

Some providers care for multiple species or let animals interact with each other. If so, ask:

- how many and what kind of animals they watch;
- how animals are separated;
- where animals are kept;
- how animals are supervised if they're together;
- how much animals interact with each other; and
- how much individual attention your pet will receive.

Ensure each pet gets their own resources, like their own bed and food bowls, to prevent issues between animals.

If your pet is a prey species - like a rabbit - ask about how much they may smell, see, or hear other animals and how they'll be protected from them, as this can cause stress.

How many staff per animal?

The number of staff should be enough to ensure that every animal is cared for appropriately, and that interactions between animals are adequately supervised to keep them safe.

What certifications or training do staff have?

Check if staff are trained in pet first aid or if they have qualifications related to animal care, training or grooming, especially if those additional services are offered.

How are animals monitored overnight?

Find out where your pet will spend the night and how they'll be monitored. Boarding kennels may use video monitoring or have staff stay overnight, though it is common for animals to be left alone during this time. If they are left alone, check if they have an emergency alert and response plan in place. Pet sitters often keep pets overnight or stay in your home, but some may only offer daytime pet sitting.

What is the daily routine?

Understand the general schedule for your pet, including feeding, exercise, socialization and play time, and bathroom breaks. For pet sitters, ask about their own daily routine and if they'll be leaving your pet alone to go to work or check on other clients.

Will my pet be taken anywhere else?

Check if your pet will be taken outside of the facility or home at any time. If you are comfortable with that, make sure you provide secure walking equipment, and that your pet has current ID, like a collar with tags and a microchip.



Can you provide any references or reviews?

If the provider does not have any publicly available reviews online, ask if they can provide references from past clients. If they cannot provide you with the contact details of a few clients for reference, that should be a red flag.

Making the Best Choice for Your Pet

Choosing the right boarding facility or pet sitter takes time and consideration, but by asking the right questions and focusing on your pet's specific needs, you can find a caregiver who will provide a safe and comfortable environment. Whether your pet thrives in a structured boarding facility or prefers a home environment with a pet sitter, the goal is to ensure they are well cared for while you're away. Trust your instincts and remember that your pet's welfare is the top priority. With the right preparation, both you and your pet can enjoy peace of mind during your time apart.

Additional Resources

Find more free guides on our website by visiting: <https://www.edmontonhumanesociety.com>

Did You Know?

You can also ask us behavioural questions by emailing:
askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 40% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. [Donate to help.](#)