

Relocating with your Pet

Moving takes much preparation and can be a stressful experience for you and your family. It's important not to forget that your animal companions are likely to also experience stress through the shuffle of moving. Just as you must find your way in a new home, they also have to readjust. With patience and planning, your animal companion's transition can be near seamless.

Before you Move

Preparations made before you move can make your life much easier when you reach your new home. Research the area to which you are relocating for the resources you will need: veterinarians, emergency clinics, pet supply stores, groomers, pet-friendly parks, boarding kennels and/or pet sitters, and professional trainers. Referrals are typically available through moving guides, or the chamber of commerce for the city to which you are relocating. You will also want to research city ordinances for pet related laws, including leash laws, animal ownership restrictions, and whether or not you will need to register your pet with the county. If moving to a new state, you may face differing vaccination requirements. Ask your veterinarian whether your pet will need any boosters or new vaccinations before you move. Certain states will require a current health certificate issued by a veterinarian in order to bring your pet across state lines. This typically entails a health exam and proof of current vaccinations, and is valid for about ten days after issue.

Identification tags with your new contact information should also be made should your pet become lost during or after the move. If he isn't already, consider having your pet microchipped with your new contact information. Both these steps will help ensure a swift and safe return of your pet.

Packing

Many pets begin to feel the stress of moving when they see their owners packing the house. Much of the stress can be attributed to their normal routine being replaced with strange new action around the house. To help reduce your pet's anxiety, try to keep your pet to his daily routine as much as possible. For example, if your dog normally remains

in his crate while you are working, is let out for a short potty break at lunch, and then spends the evening with you, keep that schedule. If he is fed at six in the evening, continue to feed him at that time. Most animals are very habit-oriented, so major alterations to their routines are often unsettling to them.

Don't forget to set aside time to spend with your pet doing an activity he enjoys each day, even if it's just for a short time. Going for a walk, playing fetch, or any other activities not only burn excess energy in your pet, they also help relieve stress. When you are unable to spend time with your pet, provide him with interactive toys to prevent boredom and keep him occupied. Be careful not to coddle your pet if he displays signs of stress. This will only reinforce that behavior so it becomes a regular attention-seeking behavior. Just like you, your pet will need his essentials readily available when you get to your new home. Items like food, bowls, collar with tags, leash, crate, litter box, and vet records should be packed in an accessible place so you can find and unpack them easily.

Your New Home

Preparations made in your new home can help the transition go more smoothly and protect your pet. Like children, pets don't always know what is safe to play with or eat, and so it is your responsibility to thwart potential accidents. Pet proofing is a means to safeguard valued belongings, as well as prevent your pet from harming himself by ingesting something inappropriate. Knowing your pet's habits will help you evaluate your home and determine what needs to be done. Some proofing measures are generally good habits, like wrapping electrical cords, keeping toilet lids closed (particularly if you use dissolved cleaning/disinfecting solutions), closing trash can lids, and putting away cleaning solutions or any substance that could be harmful or poisonous to your pet. If your pet is capable of opening cabinets, consider installing locks to prevent your pet from getting inside.

If there are rooms in your house you do not want your pet to have access to, keep the door closed or install a pet gate if there is no door. If your new home has stairs, you may consider gating the bottom entrance, particularly if your pet is not used to them, to prevent accidental falls. Garages can hold several hazards, including motor fluids and the

vehicles themselves. Motor fluids are poisonous or fatal if ingested and smaller curious pets can climb into the underside of your vehicle without your knowing until it's too late. If your pet will be spending time in the back yard, make certain it is safe for him before allowing him access. Inspect the fencing for stability and loose boards, and to make sure it will be a secure enclosure. Also look for any holes left by a previous inhabitant leading under the fence so your pet will not discover them before you can fill them. If there is a pool, make sure your dog will not be able to accidentally fall in, or get in when you can't supervise. Inspect plants or gardens for plants that are poisonous or fatal to animals. The yard should be a safe, enjoyable place for your pet to spend time. Provide shelter from heat, sun, or rain with a kennel or house, as well as plenty of water.

If you are moving to a larger home than your previous one, you may consider blocking off at first a small area of your new home. This will help your pet adjust gradually. As your pet becomes more comfortable and familiar with his new surroundings, you can progressively grant access to more areas of your home.

House Rules

When you first bring your pet into your new home is the prime time to establish new routines and house rules. One of the most important routines your pet will need to learn is where he is to eliminate. Most pets with an already established history of good house training will require little time to learn the new routine, however pets with previous house training challenges may take longer to learn. Teaching your cat where his litter box is now located typically takes only a day or two. Allow your cat to remain in the room where his litter box is housed, along with food, water, and a comfortable place to sleep. (Periodically check on him to make sure he is comfortable.) Once your cat has had opportunity to use the box a few times, the habit has been established. For dogs that are given free reign of the home, you will need to keep careful watch. Take your dog to the area outside where he is to eliminate periodically throughout the day—especially when he first wakes up and after eating. Then, reward your dog with a bite-sized treat when he eliminates in the appropriate place. If your dog is accustomed to being in a crate or dog-proofed room during the day, the habit is typically easier to establish, as your dog will not want to eliminate in the place where he sleeps. Before your dog enters his crate, as well

as immediately after you let him out, take him to his elimination area and reward him when he eliminates there.

If there are new house rules that were not in place in your previous home, begin showing your dog what is expected of him as soon as he enters the house. For example, if your pet is not allowed on the furniture, make certain everyone in the house knows and abides by this. A rule must be a rule always, not just when certain people are present. By allowing your pet on the furniture sometimes and not others only causes confusion.

Easy Moves for Pet Owners

Moving to a new home takes time and preparation, whether you are moving a few streets away or to a new state. With patience and a little time, you and your pet can move to your new home with as little stress as possible.

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