

## What to look for in good boarding kennels

**P**et owners in the UAE now have many boarding kennels to choose from if they need somewhere to leave their pet. However there are varying standards and styles of kennels so always make sure you visit the facility before making a booking for your pet. Some facilities may not allow you to look around - be extremely wary of any business that refuses to let you see their kennels for yourself.

We came up with the following list of features that should be present in a high quality, reputable & reliable facility. And we've added some tips on what pet owners can do to make their pet's boarding stay more enjoyable and stress free!

### The Facility:

- A professional facility should look clean, tidy & organized from the front office right through to the cleaning staff
- All areas for the public and for the pets should be air conditioned
- There should be strict vaccination entry requirements, especially for Kennel Cough
- A modern facility will have Webcam Access in public play areas and enclosures
- You should see realistic photos on the website and Facebook page
- Photos & videos should be uploaded onto the website or Facebook regularly
- The website should be full of information about the facility and services on offer
- The facility should have set tour times for potential customers to visit
- Phone calls and emails should be responded to promptly
- High quality products for cleaning, disinfecting & sterilizing should be used

### The Dog Enclosures:

- The best type of enclosures should have solid built walls, and full/part glass doors. This creates a quiet, calm, balanced environment, feels secure, is spacious and lets in lots of natural light. The dog should be able to see out but not see its neighbour. Wire fencing between enclosures is an old fashioned style of kennels and does nothing to promote a stress free environment
- Enclosures should not be facing each other, ie no dog should be able to see his/ her neighbour as this will encourage barking and cause stress to the animal
- Larger rooms with plenty of floor space means more personal comforting items can be brought from home to help your dog settle in quickly and feel much more at home. Owners should always be allowed to provide the pets own bedding etc.
- There should be no overpowering smell of urine & faeces or disinfectant on walking into the kennel area
- All sleeping and play areas should be air conditioned. The harsh summer climate is not kind to animals in the UAE. Pets that live with you in an apartment or villa are used to AC so the kennels must have as a minimum this feature

### The Cattery:

- Cats need a quiet area away from the noise of the dog kennels. Classical music can promote a calm environment
- The enclosures should be spacious and allow personal items to be brought in to help the cat settle
- Litter boxes should be kept away from the food & water bowls and they must be cleaned regularly so there is no overpowering smell in the area
- Stimulation must be provided for the cat in its enclosure ie scratch post, perches, hide away areas
- There should be a spacious area where the cats can exercise daily

### Daily Routines & Interactions:

Stress is the number one factor that can affect pets who are boarding but it is possible for professional facilities to minimise it. Since most boarding pets come from a loving home, the lack of human contact can be top of the list of stressors. Choosing a facility that has enough staff to cope with all the boarding pets is a priority.

- Spending time out of their enclosure every day and socialising with humans/other dogs, sniffing & playing creates a more balanced, calm and happier dog.
- The facility should have plenty of pet loving, cheerful staff who visibly enjoy their job and the interactions with the dogs & cats
- Well-managed staff who like the company of animals and who have a friendly, efficient approach can substantially reduce tension in the kennel and are probably the most important factor in reducing stress levels
- Well established routines, eg. first toilet break in the morning, same times for feeding every day
- Requests from the pet owner should be honoured ie; leaving chews in the enclosure, frequency of feeding, giving treats & medication. An excellent boarding facility will accommodate your requests!

### Things to ask & look for when visiting or researching a boarding facility:

- Check the kennels Facebook page for Reviews and do a Google search
- Does the environment feel calm and organised? There should be no overpowering smell in the dog or cat areas
- Ask to see that there are proper food storage & preparation facilities available
- Does the facility look well maintained? The kennels should be clean, tidy and welcoming
- Is there a vet on call or veterinary clinic nearby? What happens if my dog gets sick?
- Are there a lot of staff members on site?
- Find a kennels where staff are friendly, polite and interact easily with dogs & customers
- The housing for the dogs should be at the correct temperature and dry
- Check the pets to see if they look happy and settled. There will be initial barking as you walk into the kennels but this should settle quickly in a well run kennels as stress levels will be low
- Getting a dog out of kennels for exercise is essential to their welfare and is one of the easiest ways to provide mental stimulation & exercise
- Does the website/ Facebook page/ Promo material match the reality when you visit the facility?
- Is there CCTV and/ or Webcam access? Providing webcam access gives peace of mind to the pet owners and is an inexpensive way for kennels to raise their standards of Pet Care.

### How pet owners can reduce stress

- Allow plenty of time to deliver your dog to the kennels so you are not in a last minute panic and pushed for time. Otherwise, your stress will be communicated to your dog and it is better if he leaves you when you are relaxed and happy
- Take a written or typed list of your dog's ailments, medications, food intake and other special requirements
- Bring your pet's up-to-date vaccination certificate, or better yet email everything beforehand so the check-in can go more swiftly for your dog or cat
- Take a supply of your dog's normal food (if not provided by the facility), together with your pet's bed, favourite toys, chews and treats
- Take items made of natural fabric that smell of you and will retain your comforting scent for a few days while your dog settles in
- When you leave, be jolly and matter of fact, rather than consoling, so your dog understands there is nothing to worry about
- A young dog or first time boarder may benefit from a few days in kennels every so often early in life so they get used to the experience and find it easier to cope with a longer stay