

## **Moving Your Pet**

The chaos of packing, moving furniture and the strangeness of a new home could send your cat or dog into a tailspin! Talk to anyone who has moved with a family pet and you will learn that it takes planning and creativity to help your pet make a safe transition. Smaller pets like hamsters, mice, gerbils and guinea pigs will probably show little reaction to moving, especially if you provide them with a calm and easy transition and plenty of familiar food. Birds are very sensitive to sights, smells, sounds and movements and require an intricate moving day plan. Cats and dogs will adjust better when there are gradual changes to their daily routines.

When moving, the family cat or dog may react with their fight or flight instincts. The fight or flight instincts could signal your pet to run out the door, disappear in the house, terrorize the movers or destroy the rug. Being able to predict your pet's stress response will help you create a safe and serene moving plan ahead of time. Here are some suggestions to try that may help you and your pet have a successful move into your new home.

### **Before moving:**

Tour the new home with your dog.

Clearly label the box where the pet supplies are packed.

Pack a separate box for pet supplies that you use on a frequent basis: bowls, food, toys, blankets, extra leashes and collars, extra litter, scooper and bags. Keep this box handy at all times.

Don't wash your pet's toys or blankets before the move. The familiar smell will help to comfort your pet in the new home.

Locate a pet supply store near your new home and ask around for a recommended veterinarian. Your present vet may be able to make a referral. A late night trip to the store for pet food or the sudden need for a vet on moving day will only add to the stress.

Pack several gallons of water from your old home. Use it during the first few days in the new home. Many pets will become finicky when they are stressed. Even the sweet family Lab may stick up her nose at the smell of the new tap water.

Don't change the housebreaking routine at this time or try to introduce a new brand of cat litter or food.

Order new identification (ID) tags that have the new home's address and phone number. If you do not know the new phone number, make a temporary tag out of masking tape and write your present vet's name and phone number. Tell the vet about your move and give him or her an emergency contact phone number: cell phone, work number, friend, relative or neighbor's phone number.

Obtain copies of all medical records from your vet, especially vaccinations. Also, obtain any prescription refills you will need.

Most important, ask one of your trusted neighbors to keep a lookout, just in case your pet gets out of the new house and returns to the old neighborhood after the move.

Pets are creatures of habit and prefer daily routines. Try to keep the following consistent even when moving: feeding, play time, naps and sleep, walks and elimination walks. If you anticipate a change in your work schedule or are moving to a new time zone, slowly begin to change your

pet's feeding time over a period of weeks before the move. A pet-sitter might be a good option to consider as your pet is trained to the new feeding schedule.

### **Moving day:**

Keep your pet safe from the chaos. There are several methods:

Hire a pet-sitter to keep the pet occupied

Place the pet in an empty room that has food, water, a favorite bed or toy. Post a sign saying, "Do NOT let our pet out!" Create a quiet and escape-proof haven.

Board your pet at a professional kennel, but bring along a sweatshirt or blanket that carries your scent to keep the dog or cat comfortable.

For crate-trained dogs: cover the crate with a blanket and confine him in another room. For small dogs, a large inverted mesh playpen may be a good alternative. Some pets may feel more secure if they are able to watch the move in progress from a safe corner of a room.

### **Traveling with the pet:**

The distance you are traveling on moving day will determine the type of safe pet transportation.

Never pack your pet into the moving van. Moving vans were not designed to carry people or animals. It is an unsafe and inhumane choice.

Local Move:

Your pet can safely travel in a carrier in your car or large dogs can use a seat belt specifically designed for canines. Pack the items as described in "Before Moving" for easy access. Take breaks to let the dog and yourself stretch your legs. ALWAYS, keep the dog on a leash!

Long distance:

If traveling by car, plan ahead for overnight stops. Make sure the hotel accept pets. There are directories that can help you find pet-friendly hotels. Don't try to sneak your pet into a hotel - you both might end up sleeping in the car. Air travel requires extra preparation for you and your pet. Contact the airlines to determine how your pet must be contained (crated), added costs, and medical requirements. Make arrangements so that the pet is separated from you for the shortest period of time possible in the plane and at baggage claim. Also consider the effects that weather will have on your pet as they travel. During hot weather have your pet travel at night to avoid overheating in the cargo hold. Some pets cannot tolerate air flight or have motion sickness. In any case, seek veterinary advice as to the best method that provides optimum pet health and safety during a plane flight.

### **The new home:**

Make it a smooth transition. First and foremost, be concerned about the safety of your pet.

Is your new home escape proof? Walk through the entire home to check for exterior doors left ajar, room or basement windows that are open without screens, unlatched gates or fences that might lead to escape from the property.

Family pools can also be a danger zone. Make sure that your dog cannot get into the pool or on the pool cover while they are exploring the yard. Not all dogs can swim!

Pets, especially cats, are less likely to be overwhelmed if they are gradually introduced to the new home. Find a quiet area of the home and let your pet explore the area for a few days. Once

relaxed let them seek out other areas of the house. Cats will check out each room, window, closet and stairway.

After the major furniture has been put in place, some pets may require a “supervised walk” through the house for the first few days. Observe your pet for any signs of hesitancy, stress, curiosity or confusion. Notice where it acts hesitant and create a positive experience with treats or petting to decrease its fear. This might be a good time to hide one of your pet’s toys and make a game of finding it in the new home.

Don’t introduce new training methods. Stick to what has worked for your pet in the past. Keep commands consistent. The new home may have some “off-limit” areas for your pets. For example, if you want him to stay off of the new couch, do not play with him there. Find a new place for your special time together.

For “off-limit” rooms simply keep the doors shut or use a baby-gate. Avoid having to scold your pet. There will be plenty of time to teach your pet new house rules and tricks after you both have had several weeks to settle into the new home. Consistency is the basis of happiness for your pet.

Walking your dog is a good way to meet the new neighbors. Remember that outings for the purpose of your pet relieving itself are very different from exploring walks. Exploring walks take extra time, may require an extra poop bag or two, a shorter leash, treats and perhaps a squirt bottle. Give your dog plenty of time to sniff and explore and practice good behavior at street corners and yards. Anticipate that your dog may overreact to the new sights, sounds of people and pets in the area.

#### **Change in eating habits:**

Even after lots of planning and care some pets may refuse to eat in their new surroundings. Make an extra effort to give your pet their favorite food to encourage them to eat. Cats are more apt to go on a hunger strike, so tempt them with strong smelling fishy foods to interest them. Older cats and overweight cats are especially at risk if they refuse to eat for a few days. The longer a cat refuses to eat the more at risk your cat becomes to developing Hepatic lipidosis. Hepatic lipidosis is a metabolic condition that begins when body fat is improperly metabolized. It can be deadly if untreated. Keep a variety of tempting foods available for your cat and note when your cat likes to eat.

#### **Elimination problems:**

It is not unusual for pets to have a “mistake” or two during the weeks of settling into a new home. Pets do not like change and they may communicate their dislike on the new carpet. Immediately show your cat where the litter box is by simply placing her in it. If your cat does not like the litter box location, notice where the cat seems to be eliminating and place the litter box there. If necessary, over a period of time, slowly inch the litter box to a more appropriate area. Dogs may be confused as to which door they should go to when signaling their need to eliminate. Therefore, start elimination walks as soon as possible to prevent improper elimination behavior and stick to a routine. If accidents happen, understand that your pet is probably just confused, not spiteful. Patience, not harsh discipline, will solve most temporary house training problems. Dogs and cats, whether male or female, may have the urge to mark their new territory and lay claim to the new rug, sofa or kitchen corner. Do not panic and give your pet away. Consistent correction and routine will quickly override this instinctive reaction. Since cats mark territory by scratching or rubbing against items, provide a variety of scratching posts and toys throughout the house. If your pet continues to urinate or defecate in inappropriate places, find out if the previous homeowners had pets with elimination problems. This may require extensive cleaning of carpets with an enzyme product to remove the odor, which only your pet can smell. Contact your new vet for some safe enzyme product recommendations.