

# a healthy balance

## Did you know your Assistance and Work/Life Support Program could help?

### Choosing a Pet Sitter

When you're going away and don't want to leave your pet in a boarding kennel, where do you turn? If you're like many pet owners, you ask a friend or neighbor to stop in, but you may also want to consider hiring a "pet sitter."

Pet sitters do much more than provide your pet with food and water. A good pet sitter also spends quality time with your pet and knows what to do in emergency situations. Many will also bring in your mail and newspapers, water plants, and turn lights on and off to give your home a lived-in look and deter crime.

### Why Hire a Pet Sitter?

A pet sitter provides both you and your pet with many benefits. Your pet gets care and attention while you're away, staying in a familiar environment with a familiar routine. You get peace of mind knowing that, not only is your pet being cared for, but in many cases, your home will be cared for as well.

### What Should I Look For?

Before selecting a pet sitter, be sure to find out the following:

- Is he or she bonded (to protect against theft) and have commercial liability insurance (to cover accidents)?
- What training has he or she received?
- Does he or she have backup assistance?
- Will he or she provide services such as in-home grooming, walking and play time? What about additional non-pet-related services?
- If he or she provides live-in services, what are the specific times he or she agrees to be with your pet?
- Will he or she provide a written contract spelling out services and fees?
- Will he or she provide you with the phone numbers of other clients who have agreed to serve as references?

### How Can I Help the Pet Sitter?

Even the most experienced pet sitter will have trouble if you haven't kept your end of the bargain. Here are your responsibilities:

- Make sure your pet is well socialized and allows strangers to handle him or her.
- Affix current identification tags to your pet's collar.
- Leave clear instructions detailing specific responsibilities and emergency contact information, including how to reach you and your veterinarian.
- Leave pet food and supplies in one place – and buy extra supplies in case you're away longer than planned.
- Leave a key with a neighbor as a backup, and give him or her and your pet sitter each other's phone numbers.
- Show the pet sitter your home's important features, such as the circuit breaker and security system.

Finally, even if you like what you hear, it's important to have the prospective sitter meet your pet. Watch how he or she interacts with your pet – does he or she seem comfortable? If this visit goes well, consider hiring the pet sitter to care for your pet during a short period of time at first. That way, you can work out any problems before leaving your pet for longer periods.

Helping people find the right care for their pets is just one of the many ways your Assistance and Work/Life Support Program can help. For more information, call your confidential Assistance Program any day, any time, for assistance, resources or a referral to help resolve your concerns.

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