



## Top 10 things you MUST know if you are considering boarding your lab while you are on vacation.

Lab Rescue endorses the belief that all labs should be treated as a member of your family and we encourage owners to find alternative options such as family, friends, or a trusted live-in dog sitter to care for your lab if you are unable to travel with fur-baby. We also acknowledge that this is not always possible and boarding kennels may be the only option. Here are our top 10 things to think about when deciding who will take the best care of your fur-baby in your absence.

### 1. **By-law Regulations and Qualifications**

Each municipality has their own by-laws and regulations for licensing of dogs. Unfortunately there are no laws regulating boarding kennels and regular inspections are not performed by any enforcing group. There are also no limits as to the number of dogs they can house at one time.

### 2. **Cleanliness and Safety**

You MUST visit the facility and take a tour yourself before boarding

your dog. This cannot be stressed enough! Anyone can have an attractive website that answers all your questions but you cannot get a true sense of the environment without visiting the facility in person. Every room of the facility should

be clean including the staff areas which you should be allowed to see as well. The flooring should be constructed from a material that can be easily cleaned and sterilized and there should be adequate drainage to prevent the spread of viruses and parasites. Find out what they use as a cleaning agent and the steps they take to keep your dog safe while the cleaning takes place. How often do they check for and clean up feces indoors AND outdoors? The ground cover of outdoor spaces should allow for proper sterilization as well. All feeding and drinking bowls should be stainless steel and cleaned after every meal. Ask how often their water is changed throughout the day. Clean water must be available to the dog at all times. If the facility provides bedding ask how often it is cleaned during your dog's stay and if allergies are an issue it might be good to know what type of detergent they use on bedding. Check the gate doors of the kennels to ensure they latch properly.

Inspect the outdoor runs and perimeter fencing to make sure that it's in good repair with no gaps for your dog to escape. It does not matter how huge the kennel is; if it is not properly sterilized and provide assurances to keep your dog safe then do NOT take them there!

### 3. **Space and comfort**

The amount of space your dog has while in the kennel is of course a big consideration. Each kennel must be large enough for your dog to stand up fully, turn around, lie down and fully extend. Outdoor runs must be covered and provide shelter from inclement weather. Runs must provide enough space for your lab to break into a trot should they be so inclined. Find out how many dogs are housed in the facility at any given time and if there are separate areas for cats and dogs and small and large breeds. Also look at the bedding if provided by the facility and make sure will be comfortable enough for the age and physical needs of your lab.

### 4. **Ventilation and temperature**

Upon entering the boarding facility you should not be able to smell anything; no urine, feces or cleaning chemicals. If you do, go no further! All boarding kennels must have proper ventilation to provide fresh air flow through the entire facility. The temperature must be regulated and never over 80 degrees or under 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Are suites with individual temperature controls available for your senior or special needs lab?

### 5. **Exercise**

Another extremely important question to ask is how much and what type of exercise your lab will get? Without adequate exercise

your lab's pent up energy causes increased anxiety and distress. Find a boarding kennel that will provide the same exercise regime your lab would get at home. Most facilities only offer one 15 walk and one 15 minute "playtime" session. Find out where the dogs are walked and what constitutes "playtime". Being left in an outdoor run is NOT acceptable playtime. Dogs need one-on-one stimulating human interaction on a daily basis. No one knows your lab better than you so make sure the facility will accommodate the activity level of your lab either with premium care packages or add-on exercise sessions.

#### 6. Friendly Staff and staff hours

Every encounter you have with the staff should be a pleasant one from the minute you walk in the door for your tour to the time you drop off your dog. Trust your gut instinct and steer away from the facilities that are not forthcoming and compassionate. Look for facilities with staff that will treat your dog as if he were their own. Most facilities do not have staff in the building 24-7 but you need to find out how long your dog will be left alone and when you are able to contact them to check up on your dog.

#### 7. Special circumstances

Senior labs, ones with medical conditions or ones with special needs should be given extra special care at the boarding facility. Staff must be willing and able to administer medication/supplements as frequently as needed. Will they provide regular massage sessions and thicker bedding for your lab with achy joints? Will they stay with him if he gets scared during thunderstorms, no matter what time of night the storm hits? Are

there quiet suites for the lab that needs a little extra sleep? Is a boarding kennel the best place for your extra special lab?

#### 8. Vaccination Requirements

Every facility should require each dog have proof of up to date vaccinations including kennel cough and rabies. A giant red flag should go up for you if this proof is not mandatory for each dog's stay.

#### 9. Veterinary Care

Heaven forbid anything should happen to your fur-baby while you are away but you do need to know how he will be treated if he becomes ill or injured during your time away. Every attempt must be made to contact you in the event that your dog needs veterinary attention. Do they have a veterinarian on site or are they willing to transport your dog to your own vet if time permits? Research the qualifications and history of the veterinarian on site. Many boarding facilities will accommodate your request to transport your dog to his own vet if you provide a letter of consent.

#### 10. Cost

The cost of your dog's stay will also be a factor in choosing which facility to use. DO NOT choose a facility based on the fact that you got a coupon in the mail. This could be a sign that they are more interested in making money rather than providing the best care to your fur-baby. The most expensive facility also does not guarantee top service either but prices should be relatively comparable to other boarding facilities in your area offering the same care. Allow room in your budget for extras such as treats, additional exercise and grooming. You may be surprised to know that hiring a temporary live-in caregiver or in-home dog sitting service could be similar in cost to a boarding kennel but offer a more comfortable experience for your dog.

***No matter where or who you decide to have care for your lab while you are away, you MUST do your homework and check references, after all you wouldn't leave your human child with JUST ANYONE would you?***

