

BOARDING YOUR CAT FACT SHEET

Cat ownership in Australia is continually on the rise and for good reason. These small mammals who chose to live with us humans some 10,000 years ago, can bring so much joy to our lives. Therefore, as responsible pet owners we need to know what care options are available in our absence.

There may be times when the family goes away on holiday, needs to vacate their home for renovations, or is otherwise unable to have the cat at home and during these times you may be looking for the best care option for your feline friend. Boarding catteries provide a safe and comfortable alternative for your kitty, let's have a close look at what they provide.



What Options Are Available?

While the idea of travelling with your favourite feline friend may sound great, unless your cat is trained and comfortable in new environments, it could cause them and yourself more stress than joy.

Alternatively, having a friend or house-sitter pop in may not be sufficient. Cats are extremely stoic and even the smallest changes in behaviour can indicate something that needs further investigation.

If you want the best for your pet, then a professional boarding cattery is the best alternative in your absence. All members of the Australian Pet Care Association abide by our Codes of Practice, and employ personnel who are trained in observing and handling any problems which might arise in your absence.

We have had numerous reports from families wishing they had used a boarding facility or cattery, rather than asking a friend, neighbour or family member to stop in once or twice a day to

**DID YOU
KNOW?**

Did you know cats usually settle better in boarding than owners expect? Most cats adjust within 24 to 48 hours once they realise food, warmth and routine are guaranteed.



feed their cat. This is mainly due to the fact that any health or behavioural issues are picked up earlier with trained professionals, and it is natural for friends and family to feel guilty if they miss something that results in serious medical concerns.

What to look for in a Professional Boarding Cattery

- Get acquainted with the people who will be caring for your cat. Think about the following list:
 - Find out if toys and bedding are welcome
 - Find out about the diet that the cattery provides. If there is a special diet that you would like your cat to adhere to, most catteries will allow you to provide such food and will ensure that your cat is fed only what you request.
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- Discuss safety features of the cattery as boarding cats requires good security to prevent escapes.
 - Discuss openly with the Cattery staff any qualms you may have about boarding your cat. The cattery will appreciate your frankness and your interest.
 - Ask about the staff qualifications, policies and procedures in place for the care of your cat. Good facilities will keep a record of your pet's health while in case.
 - Confirm who the treating vets are, and what is the process in place for vet visits. If your cat does require veterinary aid while he is in the cattery, you should be aware that you are financially responsible for such aid.
 - Discuss before boarding any medication your cat might need, or any special care. Most catteries offer a certain amount of individual care (playing with, talking to, and petting your furry feline) so talk to them about what is included and what else can be arranged.
 - Make certain that you understand the rate structure for all services and hours of operation. The fee for boarding includes not only the care of your cat but also the peace of mind that comes from knowing he is safe and with someone that you can trust.



Facts To Consider

Keep in mind that cats react very differently in a strange environment. Cats are instinctively solitary animals, therefore when confronted with strange surroundings, a cat's normal response is to withdraw physically and mentally into a protected, solitary state.

For this reason, cats prefer the 'protected' feeling they get from being caged while in the cattery. It is therefore important that the cats do have a safe space where they can retreat and rest in their rooms until they feel comfortable in the new environment.

For cats who are regularly boarded, you may find they accept their boarding cattery like a home away from home. These cats do enjoy the added human interactions and cat-safe playtimes some catteries offer. You know your cat the best and the staff should be able to provide you feedback on the best way to ensure your cat is the most comfortable while away from you.



Why Should you choose a Pet Resort?

There are many factors to consider when deciding on the best option for your family pet. Choosing a Pet resort over other alternatives has many benefits! It is important to note that if you are looking at alternatives to a Pet Resort, such as a Pet Sitter, Pet Nanny, In Home Pet Boarding, or Backyard Boarding, many of the things below are not a requirement of people acting in this capacity.

- Pet Resorts / Boarding Facilities are run by industry professionals, who employ qualified staff to care for your pet.
- They have strict policies regarding vaccinations, meaning that your pet is best protected whilst they are away from home
- Pet Resorts / Boarding Facilities are licensed with their local Council and must adhere to standards such as maximum pet numbers, proper waste management and noise management procedures
- They have strict hygiene and cleaning procedures
- Pet Resorts / Boarding Facilities will provide the maximum amount of human interaction possible while your pet is away. Unlike other alternatives where a person may attend to your home and pet for 30-60 minutes per day, the great thing about a Pet Resort is that they staff are there all day long, and your pet will get plenty of interaction!
- They have secure fencing and properties, to ensure that all animals are contained and unauthorised people are prevented from entering
- Professional businesses such as Pet Resort / Boarding Facilities are registered businesses that are required to hold public liability insurance as a minimum, which offers protection for the pet and the pet owner.
- Whilst many of the alternative options are services run by one person, either in their own home or visiting the pet owners home, licensed boarding facilities such as Pet Resorts and Boarding Facilities have staff on hand at all times to care for the pets.
- Pet Resorts and Boarding Facilities have formal agreements that they enter into with the pet owner, so that the client clearly understands what is expected and agreed by both parties.
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Immunisation

Fortunately, within the last several years there have been significant advances in immunisation programs for cats. In past years, there were a number of contagious airborne viruses, which caused serious respiratory problems in cats.

These viruses could not be controlled except by complete isolation of all cats from each other. Now, however, thanks to advances made by the veterinary pharmaceutical companies, there are effective vaccines available to prevent such diseases. Most catteries have strict policies regarding the immunisation programs for these diseases.

You should be aware of the cattery policy and discuss it with your veterinarian prior to boarding your cat. Also ensure that your cat is not exposed to any contagious cat diseases prior to boarding. Catteries have the right to refuse your pet if they are showing signs of illness on arrival, in order to protect the other pets in their care.

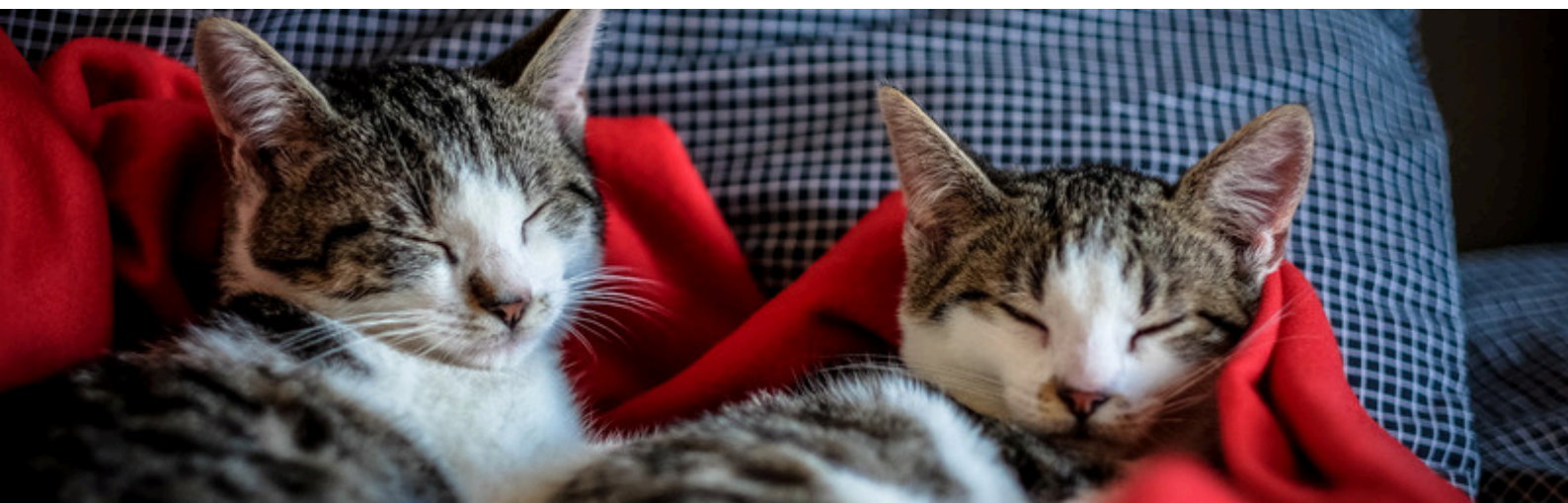


Stress Is A Factor

Any animal in strange surroundings suffers from a degree of stress. This means that his normal immune process is affected, as well as his eating and digestive habits. Your cattery will do everything possible to minimise the effects of stress on your cat, and for this reason it is a good practice for them to allow your cat to adjust to the cattery environment at his own rate. However, you can help to minimise the effects of stress by trying to make the boarding experience as pleasant as possible for your cat.

Crate familiarisation is a valuable tool for any cat owner. Teaching your cat that the crate is a good, safe place for them, helps immeasurably over the life of your cat! Too often we hear that the owner has gotten the crate out and the cat has disappeared. Conversely, regular cattery visitors see their crate and are happy to jump in as it has been associated with food or other rewards.

Remember that the more often your cat boards, the more adjusted they will be to the cattery environment, and the easier the boarding process will become for them. Therefore, several short periods of boarding prior to a lengthy vacation will probably do more to help your cat adjust to boarding than will anything else.



Welcoming Your Cat Home

After you pick your cat up from the cattery, be sure to keep them secure in the house. Ideally your cat will be exclusively indoors or only have access to a cat-safe outdoor area to ensure the highest level of safety for kitty and the environment around them.

Just as they had to adjust to the cattery, they will need time to adjust to being home again. Allow them to find that 'at home' feeling and adjust to his normal routines like meal times, bedtimes, and toilet location before letting them out of the house.



Summary of Points:

- Being prepared to board your pet cat is a proactive measure, because you never know when you will urgently need professional care for your pets.
- Spend time choosing a pet boarding facility that you trust, and that you know will provide the care that your pet needs.
- Cats take time to adjust to change, and they may act differently in the boarding environment to what they are like at home with you.
- Regularly boarding your furry feline will help them get acquainted with being away from home, and will mean that they are likely to settle in faster and enjoy their holiday!

For more information, contact the Pet Industry Association Australia by emailing us at info@piaa.org.au

