

ACCES for Pet Health

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It's Hard to be a Pet Sitter

By Beth Davidow, DVM DACVECC

During the holiday season many people leave town to visit family or go on vacation. While they are gone, many pet owners leave their animal family members in the care of others: neighbors, friends, boarding facilities and more and more frequently, pet sitters.

Being a pet sitter and being unprepared for an emergency with one of your charges has to be an incredibly difficult and awkward situation. On a recent shift, I had a pet sitter bring in an older dog she was caring for who had had a very severe seizure. The dog had been seen by the regular veterinarian and the owners knew the dog might have a brain tumor. On arrival, the dog could not use any of its legs and then had another severe seizure, which we were able to control with medication. Unfortunately, what had not been communicated to the pet sitter was what to do if the dog had worsening seizures, how

much the owners were willing to commit financially, and what they would want to happen if the dog became very seriously ill. The owners were out of the country and it was unclear if we could reach them. The pet sitter had no contact in the country that was authorized to make decisions for the owner. Furthermore, the pet sitter had no way to pay for our care.

Luckily, even though it was Sunday, I was able to reach the regular daytime veterinarian who had some instructions and some emergency contacts for the owner. After several phone calls, I was able to reach a good friend of the owner and a plan was made. The pet sitter was also able, after searching the house, to figure out an international phone number that worked to reach the owners. In a further stroke of luck, one of our receptionists spoke the language of that country- so we did reach the owners.

We have had similar situations during almost every holiday time. Most people who go on vacation don't anticipate that something serious might happen with their pet. Furthermore, they probably really don't think that the serious event might happen when their regular veterinarian is closed.

As a veterinarian, I want to do the best for every pet that walks in my door. As a business owner, I want to make sure that the services I provide are the ones that the owner of the pet would both want and can afford.

I am writing this in hopes that it will prompt you to make a plan for the unexpected with your pet sitter every time you leave town-for a quick weekend escape or an extended period of time.

Some easy steps to follow before you leave are:

- 1) Leave the pet sitter the name and phone number of your regular veterinarian AND the name and phone number of the emergency hospital that you prefer they use.
- 2) Make a plan with the pet sitter of the amount of money they can spend without authorization and a way that an emergency bill would get paid in the event you can't be reached.
- 3) If you are going out of the country or are going somewhere out of communication range, leave your pet sitter the phone number and name of someone authorized to make decisions about your pet in your absence.

We have had owners of pets who have been to our facility call and leave us detailed instructions, payment arrangements and emergency contact info prior to trips. We can put this information in our computer system



Pet Sitters need as much information as possible to care for your pet properly in an emergency situation

and this burden is then off the shoulders of the pet sitter.

By being prepared, you can help those of us in the emergency world serve you and your pet the best. For an easy, pre-made form you can fill out before leaving your pet in a sitter's hands, visit the HP Home & Office website and click on "downloadable forms":

<http://h10025.www1.hp.com/ewfrf/wc/acProject?> You can also find the form in our Link Library. This form is also great to have on-hand at any time for a quick-reference to information regarding your pet.



Always leave contact information for yourself or for someone who can make decisions regarding your pet in the event of an emergency

Posted by **Christina Ryan** at December 7, 2008 12:00 a.m.

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