



**LEAVING FOR A
VACATION BUT DON'T
KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH
YOUR FOUR-LEGGED
FAMILY MEMBER?
CITADEL INVESTIGATES
THE GROWING TRENDS
AMONGST PET OWNERS**

HOMIE ALONE

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While holidays are fun for all families, those who have to leave their pets behind will invariably be wracked with a bit of guilt and worry. When your beloved pet becomes very much a part of your family, a separation of even a few weeks can become a traumatic experience. Though the basic nature of animals is to fend for themselves and survive on their own, the ones who are habituated to human care become highly dependant on them for daily requirements, especially in terms of food.

According to Dr Hatekar, who runs a veterinary clinic, the psychology of animals (especially dogs) is very much like humans. Explaining how emotions affect their temperament, he says, "Dogs face separation anxiety when left alone for a longer period. As the feeling of belongingness towards the owner is very strong in their minds, they may refuse to eat completely for a few days, but generally their eating tends to return to normal after a day or two if they feel secure with the person who feeds them alternatively. In some cases though, despite the efforts

taken by the caretaker, the animal may just refuse to eat and has to be kept on saline water."

Although some pets are fortunate enough to travel with their owners, this option is not a very feasible one for many. Hence pet owners have to usually depend on some person who is familiar with the animal or an alternative reliable source to take care of the pet while they are away. While keeping the pet with a relative or a friend can be one of obvious choices, it may burden them with an additional chore in their daily routine, causing them considerable discomfort. Hiring a pet sitter or keeping the pet at a pets' hostel proves

to be a good alternative at such times.

According to Dr Hatekar, big canines like German Shepherds, Dobermans, Great Danes and the like have tremendous physical energy in them that needs to be drained out on a regular basis, so taking them for a run or making them play games that will tire them is very important. He suggests hiring a pet sitter or keeping the pet at a hostel, as these people are usually efficient and trained to handle big dogs and their experience helps in handling emergency situations. Also, providing the caretaker with the pets' own beds, eating bowls, toys, etc, can ease the situation to a certain extent.





Shalaka Mundada, who runs Pet Sitters (a hostel for pets at Hinjewadi) along with her father, says she insists that her clients opt for a trial stay of their pets before keeping them at the hostel in order to understand the psychology of the animal. "We maintain charts based on the information provided by the owner that gives us an idea of proper walk times, meal times and the type of food that the animal eats at home. We stick to the same and hardly make any difference in their routines. That helps in making them feel comfortable and at home quickly," says Shalaka. Also, the animals' possible reactions to touching or its preference of bathing water temperature are important things that one needs to pay attention to.

She further stresses on the importance of hygiene in the hostel, "It is important that the pet goes through a medical check up and gets certified before it comes to us, as we have different breeds staying together and chances are that skin and ear infections or infestation of ticks and fleas can spread. Kennel cough is another airborne illness that is extremely painful for the dog and spreads like wildfire." Agreeing with her point, Dr Hatekar adds, "All vaccinations necessary should be given before leaving the pet at a hostel, as that would ensure the safety of the

hostel staff as well as those who handle the animals, in case the animal snaps."

Anish Ranade, who owns a 15-month old Great Dane, Fiona, is a regular client with Pet Sitters and admits the fact that he can be relaxed about his pet when he is on outings because of the pet hostels that have sprung up in the city. "Earlier, there was no such facility available and that kept a dog lover like me away from the idea of buying a pet, as I stay alone in the city and have to travel quite frequently due to work. I have also noticed that after my pet mingles with other dogs at the hostel, he becomes more social than what he would be otherwise."

While the trend of pet hostels is catching up in the city, pet parlors are not left far behind. Here, you can groom your pet with regular treatments such as hair trims, nail trims, bathing, removal of tics and knots, or pamper it with some special treatments like hair coloring or a body massage. Pooja Karve has done a course in Singapore in pet grooming and is the proud owner of one such parlor since the last four years. According to her, it is important to clean and groom your pet before keeping it in a hostel, as maintaining hygiene in case of animals is of utmost importance and it also rules out the possibility of your pet becoming the cause of any infections.

Glenda Watsa, who owns Jazz, a 17-

month old female Labrador, is happy with her pet being at the hostel when she goes to her native place in Australia, as she feels it's become like a second home for Jazz. Strongly against hiring a pet sitter, she voices a contrasting opinion, saying, "A pet sitter would be with the pet for just an hour or two. But at the hostel, with so much open space and the company of other dogs to play with, Jazz is more than delighted to stay there and does not miss home. Moreover, it is the happiness on my daughter's face that I like to see when she sees Jazz returning home happily."

Although the idea of keeping your pet at the hostel seems to be a greatly convenient one, a word of caution while selecting the right hostel for your pet... It is of utmost importance to check the authenticity and hygienic conditions of the hostel before you hand over your pet to them, as any kind of ignorance can prove to be dangerous at times. Even if you decide to leave your pet with someone or a caretaker, make sure the person is an animal lover and won't cause any harm to the animal. Also, ensure that they know what to do in case of any emergency and can contact you at all times. Follow a few basic precautions and your time away from home will be a happy and hassle free one. ☺

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