

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR MOVE EASIER ON YOUR PETS

"It is best to remove your pets from the house BEFORE you start moving your possessions. Allowing your pets to roam free in the house while the front door is propped wide open, and people are rushing in and out lugging boxes and furniture – just creates a recipe for disaster."

Moving can be hard on everyone involved. Adults, kids, and yes...even your pets! While your pet may not understand exactly what is going on, they can sense the stress (good or bad) that the whole family is experiencing.

Add to that the fact that animals are creatures of habit and do not like changes to their usual routine, and you can understand why they become so confused. They also become quite anxious when all of a sudden, they see their human family busily throwing everything around them into boxes. Naturally, we always want to keep our pets happy and healthy because we love them...but we also want to lessen the chances of their "acting-out".

Animals, just like people, can behave rather badly when under stress, and so we need to do all we can to help them feel secure throughout the moving process. What we really need to know is: when faced with an upcoming move, how do we reduce the amount of stress that our pets are going to experience, and what can we do about the unavoidable disruption to their daily routine?

We posed this very question to industry experts, took their invaluable input, and created the following list of tips.

During the packing process

- Try to keep your pet's daily routine as close to normal as possible. Adhering to his usual feeding, exercise, and bedtime schedule is important.

- When packing, leave your pet's belongings to last. If possible, allow your pet continued access to his same food dishes, litter box, pet bed, and toys right up until moving day.

- Lessen the chances of there being any "mistakes" by keeping your cat's litter box in the usual spot, right up until you load him into the car – or until you confine him to a "transition room".

- Leave a couple of empty packing boxes open on the floor for your pet to explore. Allowing your pet to familiarize himself with these new, strange objects will prevent him from being afraid of them.

Moving day

- It is best to remove your pets from the house BEFORE you start moving your possessions. Allowing your pets to roam free in the house while the front door is propped wide open, and people are rushing in and out lugging boxes and furniture – just creates a recipe for disaster.

- If it is not possible to remove your pets beforehand, then you should select an empty room with a door to safely house them for the day. Place their food and water dishes, toys, bedding and litter box in the room with them. Many pets find the background noise of a radio comforting, and it helps to muffle some of the loud and unsettling noises that come from moving heavy furniture and boxes.

- Be sure to put collars with identification tags on your dogs and cats, as many pets do escape during the confusion of moving day. To avoid possible injury to your cat, always use a breakaway collar. Although many pets today are microchipped, having your pet wear a collar remains a good idea, as only pet care industry workers have access to the tool that reads the chip, while anyone can read your name and phone number on a tag.

- For transportation to the new home, cats should be placed in a cat carrier on the floor of the back seat, and dogs should be properly restrained. Dogs should either ride in the back of the vehicle, separated from passengers by a dog grate, or should sit in the back seat, strapped into a dog seat belt. This protects both your dog, and the passengers in the vehicle – a quick stop can send your dog hurtling forward, seriously injuring her, and those in her path.

- Never leave your pet unattended in a vehicle. While the temperature in the car may seem just a little warm to you, animals overheat very quickly. Sadly, every year there are thousands of pets who succumb to heatstroke as a direct result of being left in a hot car.

- Bring your pet's dishes, food, leash, toys, bedding, litter box, and any medications in the car with you and your pet. Providing consistency for your pet is important, so when you arrive at your new home, set up your pet's things in those spots where you intend on keeping them.

Introducing your pet to their new home

- Before releasing your pet into his new backyard, take a quick safety check. Is the fence in good shape – no spaces for your pet to wiggle through, or under? Can your pet reach the neighbor's pet through the fence, and if so, is he/she friendly? Are there any sharp objects that could pose a hazard to your pet? What about plants – are there any that could be harmful to your pet if she decided to devour them? Is there any garbage lying around for your pet to get into? Is there shade available for your pet? After running through all of these checks, be sure to leave a large, cool, bowl of water for your pet, and spend some time just sitting in the backyard with him.

- It is recommended that cats remain indoors. One study reported that cats who are allowed to roam free outside have an average life span of only 3 years, while indoor cats can be expected to live for an average of 13 years. If your cat has been allowed to roam in the past, now is the ideal time to break him of this habit. If you keep your cat indoors from day one in the new house, he will not have had time to establish his own turf outside – and will view the indoors as his sole territory.

- Again, select a room with a door for your cat to use as her "transition room". Place an extra litter box, food and water dishes, toys, and bedding inside with your cat. After a couple of days, when most of the boxes have been unpacked, the furniture placed, and things have generally calmed down – open the door and allow your cat to venture out. Before moving her belongings to where you want to keep them, allow your cat the use of the room for another 2 or 3 days while she becomes more confident in her new surroundings.

Small Pets

Birds, lizards, rabbits and other small animals are much easier to move, as they are normally used to being housed in a cage, or at least are accustomed to regularly spending “quiet time” in one. To make the journey to their new home safely, they should be kept in their cage, or placed into an appropriately sized pet carrier before being loaded into your car.

Placing a light weight cloth over your small pet’s cage will help to keep him quiet and calm during the car ride; just be sure to allow adequate air flow.

Be sure to leave some food and fresh water in with your pet. Most small animals do well with a drinking bottle that is easily attached to most cages. Remember to bring your pet’s supply of food, feeding dishes, and any medications with you in the car.

Small animals overheat even faster than large animals, so again, never leave your pets unattended in a vehicle.

For more information on how to make moving easier on your pets, or if your pet has a pre-existing medical condition that requires special care, please contact your veterinarian for advice.