

## Pet Sitter or Pet Boarding Facility?

**Consider a pet sitter or pet boarding facility for your rabbit when you travel.**

*By Kristina Crawley*

Every good rabbit owner worries about what to do with his or her pet rabbit while traveling. With rabbits, the concern can be even greater considering many potential pet-sitters' experience is limited to dogs and cats.

First and foremost, it is important to find a pet boarding facility or pet sitter who has plenty of experience with rabbits, said Kristi Cole, a licensed educator and fosterer for the Buckeye House Rabbit Society.

"Rabbits' needs are different than cats and dogs. It helps to be able to read a rabbit's body language and understand what their specific behaviors are when caring for them."

You also have to decide whether to board your rabbit with someone else, or have a pet-sitter come to your home. Cole noted the pros and cons of both situations:

### Pet Boarding Pros

Pet boarders can provide near round-the-clock supervision and attention to your rabbit as opposed to a pet sitter who comes to your home only once a day.

Pet boarders can also generally provide more activity for your rabbit.

Because they spend more time with your rabbit, pet boarders are more likely to recognize any health problems that may come up.

### Pet Boarding Cons

You will have to disrupt your rabbit's routine by transporting it to and from the pet boarding facility.

Your rabbit will be in unfamiliar surroundings, which may make it uncomfortable. (You can make it easier on your rabbit by sending along a favorite toy or its own food dishes.)

Your rabbit may be exposed to other animals and/or children, which may cause additional distress.

### Pet Sitter Pros

When a pet sitter comes to your home, your rabbit gets to stay in its own familiar environment.

Hiring a pet sitter also comes with the added advantage of getting someone to provide some surveillance for your home, and they can bring in the mail and newspaper.

Pet sitters often cost less than boarders, especially if you have other pets.

### Pet Sitter Cons

Finding someone you trust with a key to your home, and to be a caretaker for your rabbit, while you are away can sometimes be difficult.

Your rabbit will probably not receive as much attention as it would with a pet boarder.

Your rabbit is also likely that it will not get the same amount of activity it is used to, and may get bored and lonely.

### Wanted For Rabbit Care

Once you've decided whether you want to go with a pet boarder or a pet sitter, you need to go about actually hiring them.

Here are Cole's tips for finding the right person:

Ask your veterinarian or call your local House Rabbit Society chapter for references to reputable services. Pets Are Inn , Pet Sitters International and the National Association of Professional Pet Sitters are good resources as well.

Meet the potential pet sitter and be sure both parties are comfortable with the arrangement. If you're going with a pet boarder, ask to see the area prior to dropping off your rabbit.

Ask questions. Does the person have rabbits of their own? Will a pet sitter coming to your home keep the rabbit area clean? Is the pet sitter or pet boarder willing to bring your rabbit to the vet if necessary?

Finally, when it's time to leave, make sure to leave behind instructions detailing your rabbit's schedule, as well as a way to get in touch with you while you're away.