

Dog Sitting*: The good, the bad, and the ugly

Who can you trust to care for your pets...a friend, a neighbor, or a professional? The stories shared below depict some of the successes and failures I have had with dog sitters in the past 30 years.

The Good: Many people have cared for my pets in my home with no issues at all. If I am gone more than two days, I like the sitter to spend the night. None of these pet sitters were licensed or insured for pet sitting. Some of them had business cards, and some were just referrals from friends. In all cases, poop was cleaned up, my pets were happy, and my property was respected.

The Bad: I was at a community event and a stranger told me how much he like my house. Later, another stranger told how she liked playing ball with my dog. The professional dog sitter I hired either brought friends into my house or allowed unauthorized people to care for my pets. I changed my key codes and installed a camera and never used this business again.

The Ugly: One dog sitter brought her teenage daughter along during one of her visits. One Saturday night, while I was out of town, the mother went to my house to potty the dogs. She was surprised to find her daughter and the boyfriend in one of my bedrooms upstairs.

A dog client had a neighbor boy take care of their dog. The boy had been to their house often and the dog knew him well. During a visit, the dog bit the boy badly which resulted in 60 stiches.

A dog client had a neighbor take care of her dog. The neighbor opened the door, the dog ran into the street, and was killed by a car.

A dog sitter brought her own dog to the house and her dog attacked the dog, which resulted in Vet bills over \$5,000.

How do you find a good pet sitter?

1. Ask your Veterinarian
2. Word of mouth
3. Check references and use common sense

What should you expect from a dog sitter?

1. Good references
2. Have them do a home visit to see how they interact with your pet.
3. Establish the ground rules about feeding, walking, crating, etc.
4. Read the contract (if they have one)
5. Have an emergency plan in place.
6. HSUS has a good article, "Choosing a Pet Sitter" on www.humanesociety.org

I am in favor of using a pet sitter professional or not, but if you cannot find a good one, kenneling is a safer choice. All of our local kennels do a tremendous job, and they book up very quickly.