

Moving with Your Pet

Moving to a new home is a huge adjustment for a family. There are many things that can cause stress during a move. This stress is often felt by the family's pets. Whether you are moving across the country or across town, your pets may feel stress and anxiety. There are many ways to help make the transition as safe and easy as possible for both you and your pets.

Choosing a new neighbourhood, house or apartment

When looking for a new home, make sure it is a good fit for your pets as well. It is a good idea to walk around the neighbourhood to see if the area seems safe for you and your pets.



Space needs are different for dogs and cats

For your cats, your new home ideally should allow for plenty of room to build vertically as cats like to be at different heights throughout the day. It is easy to provide vertical space with shelving, cat trees and boxes (see references below for ideas).

For your dogs, their needs will depend upon their age, activity level and health. Older dogs, puppies and dogs with health training issues will need to go outside often, which may be difficult in an apartment building with lots of stairs or no yard.

Packing up your home

Pets are not big fans of change - especially cats. You can help your cats (and skittish dogs) adjust to the moving process by bringing in moving boxes and other materials early, and by keeping your furry friends in a familiar room you are planning to pack last. There is a lot of activity on moving day so it is probably best to keep your pet away - ideally at another family member's or friend's home. You may also want to board your pet in a kennel for the day. If you need to keep your pets in your home then try to keep them in a quiet room with the door shut. This will prevent your pets from becoming scared and trying to make a quick getaway while the moving truck is being loaded. During the moving process, try to keep your pets routines as normal as possible.

When packing up your home pack a kit of basic supplies for your pets. It sometimes takes a bit of time to unpack when you arrive at your new home and having basic supplies readily available will help get your pets through the first couple of days in your new home. Include some food, medications, grooming items, kitty litter, bedding and of course some of your pet's favourite toys.



Planning your road trip

Many pets have not spent much time in crates/carriers or cars. To help them feel comfortable during the move, and to minimize their stress, you should start getting them used to their carriers in the weeks to months leading up to the big event (see references below for crate training).

It is a good idea to spray the inside of the carriers and the bedding with pheromones 15 minutes before introducing the crate as this can help lower stress for your pets (i.e Feliway, Adaptil, see below for references).

Prepare your pets by gradually getting them used to their crates. Place their food inside an open crate. Once they are comfortable with this, try having them eat their meals in the crate with the door shut.

Try carrying your pets around the home in the crate or taking short drives with them. As they become accustomed to this try longer periods and longer drives.

You can help your pets develop a positive association with the crate by providing treats and playtime when crate time has ended.

It is also important to have your pet's veterinary records when you move. Speak with your vet before the move and get copies of your pet's medical records. This will help your new vet take care of your pets and will help save you time, money and stress. If your pets have identification tags or microchips you will want to have your address information and contact numbers updated as well.

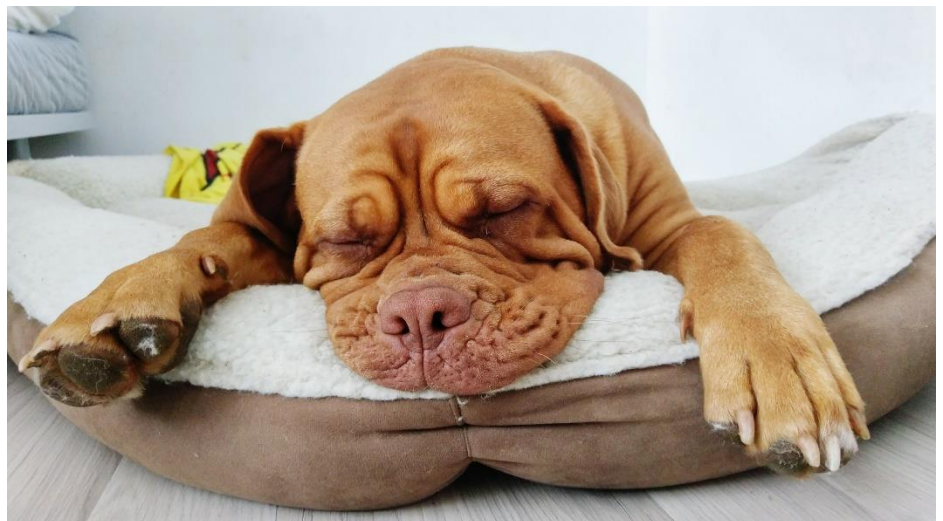
If your pet tends to get car sick, speak with your vet ahead of time to get them proper medication. It will be a long and stressful car ride for both you and your pet if you don't plan ahead.

For long distance moves plan ahead by searching for pet friendly hotels along your route. There are great websites that can help you with your search. If you are traveling by air please see our handout regarding Leaving the Country with your pet as it has links to information regarding air travel with your pet and requirements for pets traveling to other countries (see references below).

Pet Proofing Your New Home

If you can, it is a good idea to pet-proof your new home prior to your pets arrival. Make sure electrical cords are tucked away, plug up spaces where your pet could get stuck, and fix any broken doors and windows your pet could escape from. It is also a good idea to remove any poisonous houseplants and confirm that no pest-control poison traps are in the home (see references below).

If you can, it is also a good idea to go to your new home early to start setting things up for your pets before they arrive. This will allow them to adjust with familiar items such as blankets, pet beds and toys.



Settling In

When you arrive at your new home at the end of your long journey, it will be tempting to let your dog or cat loose to explore, however, this can be very overwhelming for your pets. Be extra careful that your pets do not leave the new home. There can be a lot of things going through their heads and it is important that your new home is secure to prevent your pet from getting lost outside. Ideally keep your pets in their carriers when transporting them and to not release them until you are in your new home.

Once in your new home, you can help your pet adjust to their new surroundings by:

- Allowing them to adjust to one room - their “home base” - which should include their food and water bowls, treats, toys, bedding and litter boxes for cats.
- When they seem comfortable, gradually allow them into other rooms in the house while keeping some rooms closed.
- You can relocate your cats litter boxes from the “home base” room to a more permanent location by moving them slowly over time. Try moving the boxes one foot each day closer to the desired location.
- Using a pheromone diffuser or spray (i.e. Feliway, Adaptil) in the new home for the initial new weeks in the home may also help reduce your pets stress

Moving is a big step for you and your family. You can make the process a smooth one for you and your pets by planning ahead. Keeping things organized and calm will ensure you and your pets are comfortable, less stressed and safe. With patience, your pets will be loving your new home in no time.

References:

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