

## Dr. Nancy Kay, DVM, DACVIM

Nancy has more than 30 years of experience in the veterinary industry and is a board-certified veterinary specialist in internal medicine as well as a valued member of IDEXX's Pet Health Network team since 2014.

If you're like me, the most challenging aspect of going out of town is making sure that the animals you leave behind will be well cared for. My first choice, in this situation, is to have a professional pet sitter care for my menagerie, either in my home or within the pet sitter's own home (emphasis here on "home" rather than "kennel").

### How do I screen for a responsible pet sitter?

Finding a responsible, capable, attentive, and loving pet sitter requires some research. An interview is a must, and I encourage you to use the list of questions provided here by [Pet Sitters International](#) as a resource for interview questions. These questions reference the individual's work ethic, character, and experience.

It's also important to assess the prospective pet sitter's knowledge about pet health issues. My experience has been that many dogs and cats wait to get sick until their human family members are out of town. When this happens, the pet sitter's medical expertise can make a big difference in the animal's health outcome.

### Here is a list of health-related questions you can ask during the interview process:

1. Does the pet sitter have experience administering medications? If so, what type? Be sure to ask specific questions that pertain to your individual pet. Having successfully administered oral medication to a dog doesn't promise successful administration of oral medication to even the most docile of felines. Those of you with kitties know exactly what I'm talking about! What if your pet becomes sick and requires administration of subcutaneous fluids (fluids injected under the skin for purposes of hydration)? How about eye or ear medication? Is the pet sitter adept at providing these sorts of therapies?

2. In the mind of the pet sitter, what sorts of symptoms warrant medical intervention? What symptoms constitute an emergency? Ask your prospective pet sitter to describe such scenarios and provide examples of medical issues that have arisen with animals previously cared for. Challenge your potential pet sitters with the questions posed in the article titled, ["What Would You Do?"](#) Their answers may nix or seal the deal.

3. What would the pet sitter do if your pet becomes sick after hours? You will ideally be providing your chosen pet sitter with a list of preferred veterinary hospitals, but ask this question in advance of doing so in order to get a sense of the prospective pet sitter's way of thinking about this situation.

4. What would the pet sitter do if you cannot be reached during a medical emergency? Would he or she proceed with everything necessary or choose to wait until you can be reached? Once you do hire a pet sitter, be sure to provide a completed [contingency plan](#) specifying what should happen in the event that you cannot be reached during an emergency.

5. Is the pet sitter knowledgeable about the medical condition(s) your pet has and familiar with the characteristic symptoms and how to respond to them?

6. If your pet becomes sick and requires more time and care than originally agreed upon, will the pet sitter be able to accommodate this?

### Tell us below:

Has your pet ever become sick when you were out of town? How did things turn out?

*If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.*