

concerning animals

Cool ideas for cats and canines

BY JOAN LOWELL SMITH
 FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

SUMMER PRESENTS a variety of conflicting vacation decisions. Do you take Rusty and Dusty along, or find a place where they'll be happy and you won't worry about them? Unless you're sharing a beach retreat down the Shore or going to a camp in the north woods of Maine, you might want to send them to their own camp while you toddle off to Bora Bora.

Boarding options

Let's say you send them to one of the Camp Bow Wow franchises in Bridgewater, Midland Park or Lawrenceville, where they concentrate on socialization (translation: dogs romp around together). They could wind up having more fun than you do. Or you could opt for lavish luxury at Morris Animal Inn in Morristown, where the focus is on hands-on interaction. Each dog receives a customized program to fit his personality. Dogs and cats



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lounge in individual "suites" complete with TV. (Don't laugh. My husky watches Animal Planet.) There is no comingling at Morris Inn unless dogs live together or already know

each other. Personalized attention at the facility includes frolicking in the indoor pool, although not many cats request that privilege. Pet Pals Resort in Metuchen (www.petpalsresort.com) offers a day care program that has dogs wagging their tails on return visits, living up to their motto: "Where your pets will arrive as guests and leave feeling like family!" Their

full boarding facility keeps dogs and cats entertained while you vacation.

Unless you have a relative or reliable friend who'll watch your pets while you're gone, you could contact pet sitters organizations like **FETCH! Pet Care** (www.FetchPetCare.com), Pet Sitters International (www.petsit.com) or the National Association of Professional Pet Sitters (www.petsitters.org), which offer bonded sitters to visit your home as many times as you choose.

Another option is to board your pets with a veterinary hospital that provides more than a cage, like the Iselin Veterinary Hospital, which boasts a full playground for dogs to romp one-on-one with a vet tech as many times as you schedule during the day with the added assurance that a staff of veterinarians and techies is there in case of a problem.

Many PetSmarts have boarding kennels. I visited the spanking new, huge PetSmart in East Hanover (in front of Mount Pleasant Animal Shelter). Dogs are treated royally. The lobby rivals a four-star hotel. You can book a suite with TV and piped in music. Dogs are exercised, and a vet is on staff.

Travel challenges

For those who take pets on a long drive, these days it's easy to map out motels accepting pets. Get the latest copy of DogFriendly.com's 691-page "U.S. and Canada Dog Travel Guide" (Tara and Len Kain, \$19.95) but keep in mind that you can't leave a dog in a room for extended periods while you galloway. He could bark his head off and be miserable even in an air-conditioned room. On the ride itself, only stop at restaurants accepting pets (many have out-

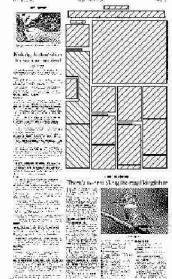
door dining where Rusty can sit by your table) or opt for a drive-through.

If you've decided on a jaunt to Tierra del Fuego and wish to fly Rusty or Dusty along, my advice is simple: Think twice. With heightened security, travel with pets, even in the cabin, can be a nightmare. Take Ron and Sonja Burkett's recent experience when they decided to take their two cats on a flight. Cabin space had been secured in advance for each cat to be tucked in separate carriers in front of the couple. They had purchased harnesses for the pair, knowing they'd have to remove the cats for carrier inspection, but they had no glimmer of what would follow. The cats freaked, especially one who struggled to escape the harness. Ron dropped to the floor to cover the cat with his body until the carriers were found to be devoid of contraband. "Meanwhile, the employees laughed at us. We were not amused," Sonja said, concluding, "We'll leave our cats home in Westfield next time."

Taking the heat

No matter how you decide to spend your vacation, or if you stay put at home, dealing with the ravages of heat on pets is a serious issue. Similar tips came from the Humane Society of the United States and the American Kennel Club. Some tips are my own. Many apply to cats, as well as dogs.

- Traveling or at home, water bowls must be refilled frequently.
- Always provide shady shelter for a dog left outdoors for any period; check water often.
- Do not walk dogs between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on beastly hot days. Forget about jogging when temps soar. Exercise dogs early or late, and make it brief on very hot days.



■ A dog whose tongue turns deep red accompanied by excessive panting is in trouble. (Dogs only perspire through their mouths and a bit from their paws.)

■ Never leave a dog unattended in a car. It's a myth that cracking the windows makes a difference. It doesn't. An 80-degree outside temperature can reach a deadly 120 degrees in minutes. Dogs and cats are susceptible to heat stroke, brain damage and/or possible death when trapped in a car. Leave pets behind on scorching days. (Few cat owners need that advisory, since most cats dislike planes, trains or automobiles. Just ask the Burketts.)

■ When traveling, make sure you take proof of current vaccinations and products to prevent heartworm, fleas and ticks.

■ Have pets microchipped in case you become separated. Schering-Plough produces Home Again, a microchip the size of a grain of rice, easily inserted by a veterinarian between the animal's shoulders. The chip hooks up to a computer network connected to veterinary offices that can reconnect pet and owner.

■ When heat hits the 90s, as it has done frequently even before the official start of summer, if you can afford it, leave the AC on for Rusty and Dusty when you go out.

They'll be grateful.

Next week: An extremely busy woman makes time for Boxer Rescue.

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Jill Iurato of **FETCH! Pet Care**, which is a pet sitting service.