



Does your doggy day care centre or dog walker tick all the boxes?

Choosing the right dog walker or doggy day care centre for your dog.

Doggy day care and professional dog walkers offer a vital service for many caring owners who are unable to fulfil all the needs of their beloved pet. Dogs need to be walked and kept stimulated so if an owner has to work long hours and the dog is left alone then sending them to a doggy day care centre or out for a walk with a professional dog walker is a good way to fulfil these needs.

So how do you choose which doggy day care centre or dog walker is right for your dog? The "Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors" (APBC) has produced guidelines to help and all you have to do is to tick the boxes.

- Has your dog walker/day care centre the correct licences for your area.
- Has your dog walker/day care centre public liability insurance?
- Do they hold relevant qualifications in dog care and welfare?
- Do they hold qualifications in canine first aid?
- Do they use reward based training methods?
- Are you asked to fill in a detailed registration form, which includes you and your vet's emergency contact details?
- Do they ask you to provide proof that your dog is up to date with all its vaccinations including kennel cough?
- Do they provide an initial assessment to make sure your dog fits in with the other dogs in their care?
- Do they ask if your pet is neutered?
- Are you allowed to look around or go out for a walk before committing your dog?

- Are you happy that your dog will be well provided for with food, clean water, shade, activities and toys?

- What is the maximum number of dogs that your dog will be walked with and are you confident that the walker can maintain proper control of a group that size?

- During transport will your dog be suitably restrained in a crate or car harness?

- How long will your dog be transported and walked and will your dog ever be left unattended in or outside the vehicle?

Not all dogs enjoy being with lots of other dogs in a busy environment especially if they are getting on in years, have a medical problem or are nervous souls. They may prefer to stay at home with someone they know popping in at lunch times to say hello and to let them out into the garden.

If you tick any of the boxes below after your dog has spent a few weeks in doggy day care or with a dog walker you might want to reconsider your options.

- Your dog has suddenly shown wary or aggressive behaviour towards other dogs or people.
- They have begun to pull badly on the lead and show excitable behaviour.
- They seem withdrawn and you feel that their behaviour has changed.
- They have received unexplained physical injuries.
- They are no longer excited to go out for a walk.

If you are worried about any change in your dog's behaviour please seek advice from a qualified animal behaviourist such as an APBC member (www.apbc.org.uk) in your area via a referral from your vet.