

Pet Sitters Club offers a wide range of services, including walking and transportation.



Going Out? Call Your Best Friend's Best Friend

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As a pet owner, it's often difficult to find comprehensive, daily care for your pet while you are at work or on vacation. A common solution is to ask friends or neighbors to look after pets, but pets usually require several visits, feedings, or walks per day. If your pet has special needs, such as medical needs, it's hard to ask for care from someone who does not normally have an obligation to care for your pet.

That's where Pet Sitters Club comes in. Founded in 1999, the in-home pet care business, run by James and Naomi Garfinkel, has been offering all-inclusive short-term and long-term care provided by experienced pet sitters, catered specifically to your pet.

The Garfinkels once experienced the same frustration that plagues most pet owners who are trying to find appropriate and convenient care for their pets.

"At the time, we had cats," said Naomi Garfinkel. "We were away and we [had to] beg, borrow, and steal from a neighbor, a friend, and a relative on one vacation to get the care [our pets' needed]."

While on vacation, the Garfinkels met a family who also agreed that there was a lack of convenient, all-inclusive pet care. The family, from Boston, had put their own pets in the care of a pet-sitter, an idea that inspired the Garfinkels' now-14-year-old business.

Pet Sitters Club offers pet-walking and other in-home services while their 2,000-plus clients are at work or on vacation.

The most important difference, Garfinkel feels, between the services offered by Pet Sitters Club and those received from neighbors or friends is that their sitters are animal lovers whose top priority is the comfort and care of your pet.

"We felt like we were imposing when we had to ask people [to care for our pets] when they weren't really people who loved pets, let alone our pets," Garfinkel laughed. "Most people consider their dog or their cat [as] their child because they always need your care. So, really, to find somebody who is professional, who does [pet-sitting] for a living, and who truly loves animals is a very unique situation, but that's what we offer."

The biggest benefit of using pet-sitting services is, in Garfinkel's opinion, that pets can be cared for directly in the environment in which they feel most comfortable: their own homes. Kennels are stressful for many pets, especially if the pet is a rescue animal or is unaccustomed to being caged or being away from its owner.

"Pets are happiest in their own environments," Garfinkel said. "When you leave them in a caged environment or in an unfamiliar setting, they might not understand that you're coming back for them, so some dogs may suffer anxiety. When they're exposed to other dogs, there's a potential for them to get sick. From our perspective, a pet should be exactly as you leave them when you come home. So if you go away on vacation, when you come back, [your pet] should be happy and healthy, just as when you left."

To arrange care for your pet, Garfinkel sets up a consultation with the pet sitter and your pet. The sitter learns specific feeding instructions, veterinarian information and where the owner can be reached. Pet Sitters Club is also bonded and insured so that pet owners can feel safe letting sitters into their homes. One visit to the home is \$21 and lasts half an hour.

Pet Sitters Club has locations throughout Nassau and Queens. Consultations can be arranged by calling 516-466-5617 or visiting www.petsittersclubinc.com.