RELOCATION, RELOCATION, RELOCATION

TAKING THE STRESS OUT OF MOVING WITH YOUR PETS BY LISA TREEN

Moving house is considered one of life's great stresses, coming a close third following a death in the family or divorce. Just the thought of packing and cleaning has most of us wanting to crawl into our happy place and not dwell on the overwhelming tasks ahead.

Our pets too, feel stress as moving day draws closer, but there are some simple steps you can take to minimise stress on yourself and your fur family. The key is to plan ahead and book services, such as removalists, early. There will always last minute things that arise so the more you can do on the front end, the better it will be on the back end.

Even if you're only moving one street or two suburbs away, a professional removalist company can minimise the time taken for the actual move. Always research your removal company—enlist the expert advice from friends who have recently moved. Another source for a good recommendation is a storage company in your local area. Large storage companies such as Storage King and Kennards in Sydney and Fry's and Fort Knox in Melbourne, will all have local knowledge on the most professional removal companies in your area. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone to make some enquiries.

Removalists take the backbreaking work out of hauling and lugging your heavy furniture during removal day. It may seem like they're spending a lot of time packing the truck but experience means that they know how to stack your furniture and belongings in an efficient manner.

While you're busy lodging your mail redirection service and requesting final readings for your gas and electricity accounts, you should take some time to make arrangements for your pets. Removal day creates so much upheaval with people coming and going, doors opening and closing, and a general flurry of activity. It creates a really stressful environment for our pets. There's also the potential for cats to hide and dogs to escape. That's why you should consider removing your pet/s from all this hustle and bustle and book them into a boarding facility or arrange for them to stay with friends or a relative.

In a recent move, I booked my two dogs and cat into their favourite home away from home—a kennel and cattery. My preferred pet accommodation has a home pick-up service with a purpose-built van to transport feline and canine customers. On booking the accommodation, they work out a mutually convenient time for pick-up and delivery to your new home. My preference was to book them in a couple of days before the move. That way, I knew that they would be safe and not exposed to the stress of boxes and furniture being moved. My removalists were happy because it made their job so much easier not having dogs and cats underfoot. I allowed a four-day stay in total, as I wanted to have the majority of the unpacking done before they arrived to their new home.

If your preferred cattery and/or kennel doesn't have a pick-up and drop off service, you can find specialist pet taxis that quote their fee structure ahead of booking. Always book accommodation and travel arrangements well in advance, even if you're not moving during holiday peak season, so you have peace of mind that your pets can be provided for.

If you're moving to another council municipality you will need to check on their registration requirements for companion animals. Most councils have this information on their websites and you can download their forms ahead of your move. Remember to update your microchip information as well—microchips are just a series of numbers, they don't store your address or contact phone numbers.

Get a new ID tag made up for cats and dogs. If you're unsure about what your new home phone number will be then have your mobile number engraved on it. Tags are often the fastest method of reuniting with your pet if they slip out the side gate into unchartered territory.

Another consideration is whether you're going to continue to see your regular vet or change to one closer to your new home. Even if you're going to continue seeing your regular vet, it's always a good idea to know the location of your nearest veterinary surgery in case of emergency. Your trusted vet can probably make a recommendation on a surgery closer to your new home. If changing vets, request that your pets' medical records be forwarded to the new clinic. This will save time in the future and ensure that accurate records are maintained.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CATS AND DOGS

Dogs are very adaptable creatures and will probably embrace new surroundings with enthusiasm and gusto. Cats, on the other hand, don't like major changes to their environment. Cats are territorial by nature and they mark their scent by rubbing over objects in your home—not just furniture but walls, windowsills and cupboards. Moving can be quite a terrifying experience for a cat, especially if the new home has cat scents from previous occupants.

Isolate one room where you can release your cat upon arrival. Some cats stay in their pet carriers for hours before venturing out. Others are more adventurous and need little coaxing. Make sure that the room you choose is secure and windows and doors are shut—the last thing you want is your cat to get spooked and bolt into unknown territory. Before you release your

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cat into the isolation room, clean it thoroughly to remove any remaining cat scents. A wipe down with mild detergent is probably enough but if you suspect that there has been scent marking previously, get out the big guns and attack these with products like Urine Free and Urine Off. And remember to leave fresh water and food in an accessible place in the room. This may seem obvious but sometimes the most simple things are overlooked.

Unless you have a mellow moggie, it will take a while for your cat to feel secure enough to venture through the rest of the house. Take the time to let your cat explore your new home, room by room.

Feliway is a product worth considering as it can assist your cat to relax during this transition period. Feliway is a natural product proven to alleviate stress-related behavioural problems. It's a synthetic copy of the feline facial pheromone, used by cats when they 'face rub' objects. Face rubbing is a behaviour that is exhibited in happy cats. This has the effect of influencing you cat's mood and shifting it to a more desirable feeling.

Feliway comes in both a spray-on applicator and a diffuser that plugs into any household power point. The diffuser works in the same way as plug-in air fresheners. There's also a similar one for dogs called D.A.P. or Dog Appeasing Pheromone. Similar solutions can also be found in the form of collars for both cats and dogs. The Good Behaviour Pheromone collar for dogs and cats is scented with calming lavender and chamomile.

INTERSTATE OR INTERNATIONAL

If moving interstate, then special consideration should be given to the travel time to your final destination. Your dog may love travelling in the car on your favourite road trips, however a faster and less stressful option would be to organise their relocation through air travel. There are a number of companies that specialise in both interstate and international pet travel and they can arrange your pets' journey.

Sydney now has a boarding facility at the Airport, where pets can be dropped off and housed before their big journey. Hanrob opened their airport facility called Park, Bark and Purr back in 2007 and are scheduled to open their Melbourne-based facility in June of this year. Both facilities aim to take the hassle out of flying and relocating. The Melbourne location will be a state-of-the-art facility offering boutique accommodation much the same as the Sydney location. They even offer training sessions whilst your dog relaxes in their temporary digs.

International pet transport services will provide a full service that includes the relevant vaccinations, health tests, import permits, AQUIS paperwork and pre-export quarantine if needed. They're experienced with each country or territory and what is required accordingly. It takes the guess work out of such a scary move.

On a final note, your pets' transition into a new home will be made much easier if you ensure they have familiar things to come home to. Take time to set up their bedding, water and food bowls and have some familiar toys around to play with. Keep dogs close to their new home for a couple of days before venturing out into their new neighbourhood. Also keep dogs on leash for the first week or so after your move. This will make everyone at both ends of the leash feeling more secure and safe.

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