

What to Look for in a Professional Pet Care Provider

By [Peggie Arvidson-Dailey](#).

More and more people are jumping on the “pet-care bandwagon” which is a testament to the amount of money Americans are spending on their millions of pets.

I’m committed to helping pet-lovers have great experiences with their pet-care providers – so, I’ll share some things that you should be aware of that **differentiate professional pet-care providers from hobbyists**. Hobbyists think that pet-care is an easy way to make a few bucks. Professionals are in business for the long-haul and realize that making money is not easy.

Here are 11 concepts to keep in mind when researching pet-care providers.

1. Professionals have a back-up plan. Because they consider themselves business owners, they have procedures and plans in place to accommodate all the pets in their care – even if they get a flat tire, have a personal emergency, or catch the flu. As you interview pet-care providers make sure you understand, and are comfortable with their ‘back-up’ plans.

2. Professionals are prepared. Any pet-care business owner has had their share of ‘emergencies.’ These range in scope from dealing with a deceased pet to dealing with keys that don’t work. Make sure your pet-care provider has a process for dealing with any issues that may come up.

3. Professionals never overbook. Find out how many visits your pet-care provider makes on an average day – then do the math. Ask your pet-sitter to be realistic about how many trips they can make each day in order to ensure your pet is getting visited for the length of time you’ve contracted. No pet-sitter starts out wanting to short-change their clients, but sometimes during busy seasons, in an effort to serve all the clients who make requests, they may be forced to shorten visits. If you are booking for visits during busy times, be aware of this.

4. Professionals recognize their value. It's tough to make a living in this business, and many pet-sitters start out with the goal of helping as many pets as possible. However, the cost of running the business often can run a great pet-sitter out of business if they are not charging enough for the value they provide.

5. Professionals use a contract. In order to protect you as well as the business, pet-care professionals have a contract that details their responsibilities while you're gone. It's important to spend time reading the document and ensuring that both you and your pet-care provider are clear on what's expected, and, what's NOT expected. I've heard of pet-sitters who trim nails, clip fur and provide 'extras.' This is great, as long as you expect your dog to be trimmed when you return home.

6. Professionals put the well-being of the pet above all else. As a pet-care business owner, my goal is that when you come home your pet is happy and healthy. For that reason, we do not remove dogs from their home, let them roam free or transport them in packs. Even if it's something you would do!

7. Professionals have their business in order. Ensure that your pet-care provider has the appropriate insurance and business license required to provide service in your area. I recently heard a story about a person who had to cut their vacation short, because the friend who was caring for their house left the water running over night and flooded the finished basement – where the kitties lived! Luckily the kitties were okay, but the clean up was expensive and the destruction was fairly extensive.

8. Professionals spend time educating themselves on topics related to business and pet-care. A pet-care business owner should be up-to-date on pet-care first aid as well as issues affecting business owners in their jurisdiction.

9. Professionals are easy to talk to and are happy to communicate with you – even when you have a less than great experience. They are in business for the long-haul and are committed to addressing your needs and concerns.

10. Professionals provide real-life references. They have a list of testimonials in their marketing materials and are happy to provide you with names and contact information of happy customers.

11. Professionals take pride in their profession! They never bad-mouth other pet-care professionals either by name or association.

Whether you've just added a new puppy to your home and need someone to provide midday walks and potty breaks, or you're planning your first trip since adopting your kitten, keep these tips in mind as you interview professional pet-care providers.

Peggie Arvidson-Dailey is the owner of Peggie's Pet Services (one of her region's BEST Pet-Care companies selected by *The Washingtonian Magazine*. She's also the **Pets in the City** Columnist for *The Del Ray Sun* and an engaging and lively speaker on topics related to the love affair between dogs and their humans. She's an advocate for happy and healthy homes for all species and is eager to assist in creating them. If you want a monthly dose of tips and golden nuggets of information on living with and caring for your pet throughout his life, be sure to subscribe to "The Care of Pets" e-zine at <http://www.peggiespets.com>. If you're a **pet-care business owner** interested in taking your business to the next level, be sure to visit <http://www.petcareuniversity.com>.