

Animals are very complex. They have their own feelings and react in their own unique way to different situations that arise in their environment. Having someone enter your home and provide care to your pet when you aren't there can be stressful for many animals. They may also react differently to different people entering their home.

When my dog's routine suddenly changes, I think about how it might look to him. I am reminded of my first day of preschool. Entering the classroom for the first time at the tender age of 3, only to be greeted by a big scary (in my eyes) adult at the door and then to be guided into the classroom to what seemed like hundreds of little eyeballs staring me down. All I could think about was why my Mom was leaving me with these strange people and what I could do to escape this horrible predicament that I was in.

I venture to guess that our pets have similar emotional responses when we leave them for vacation or whenever there is any sort of routine change. And then that first visit by the pet sitter... "who is this strange person and why are they in my home?" At Fur-Get Me Not we strive to help make your pet comfortable and to follow their routine as much as possible. We try to mitigate anxiety for your pet, and for our team members, by proactively taking steps to set everyone up for a successful visit.

While animals do not talk to us, we can still recognize their signs of fear, anxiousness, and general discomfort. Our team participates in active training sessions to help guide them through successful first-time greetings with the pets. In addition to providing this training, we conduct initial consultations with you and your pets, update visits whenever you request them or when you relocate or add another pet to the household, and we have the employee walk along with another team member to help create a successful transition so that your pets are comfortable allowing our pet sitters and dog walkers to enter your home to provide the necessary care. We do everything we can to prevent having an employee walk in "blind" to someone's home and to minimize that "surprise" element for your pets.

We schedule an initial consultation with all new customers and their pets prior to the start of a reservation. The team member who will be the point person in caring for your pet will schedule this meeting. We feel it's important for the caregiver to meet both you and your pet. Making sure your pet and our team member are comfortable with each other is one of the main goals of the consultation. We believe an in-person meeting, in a familiar environment with family present, increases the chances that your pet will warm up and adjust to a stranger in a meaningful way. This also gives us the chance to discover any potential issues that are specific to the environment we should be aware of. The visit is organic; we will follow the pace of your pet to allow them the appropriate time to get to know us. We want to give your pet the opportunity to provide consent to be approached so that we

do not force anything. Sometimes this takes patience and time for which we'll use to capture details about your home, your pet care instructions, and gather the details needed to maintain the typical household routine that your pets are accustomed to.

Update visits and walk along meetings are conducted in-person with existing customers and their pets. We have learned that animals have different levels of comfort meeting someone new, and sometimes we are even surprised by what can cause discomfort. Similar to people, change can sometimes be hard, and every animal is unique in how they adjust to change. While your dog or cat may have grown comfortable with a previous dog walker or pet sitter, a new or substitute pet sitter might cause anxiety. When given the opportunity we will do our best, prior to any change in caregivers, to offer an update visit or walk along. Our goal is to build long-term relationships with your pets and this personal introduction can help maintain that bond.

Another important benefit of in-person meetings is to review the instructions provided electronically and ensure that we understand so that there is no miscommunication around feeding and medication instructions, especially if those instructions are numerous or unique. This can be particularly helpful when caring for multiple animals with different feeding instructions. Our team member will then provide this feedback to our office team so that your records are updated and accurately reflect your instructions for any employee providing care in the future.

Thinking back to my first day of preschool, it was probably no more than 20 minutes into that initial introduction, when that scary teacher turned out to be a really nice woman who took my hand at the door and with a gentle voice, introduced me to several new friends. Her approach had a calming effect on me and allowed me to enter the room and acclimate to the environment at my own pace. That is what we strive to accomplish with in-person pet care meetings - to break down barriers, build successful relationships, and establish solid bonds with your pet.