

**FAMILY TIPS**

# Pick a pet sitter to fit your needs

**STAFF REPORT**

The holiday travel season is upon us, and many vacation-bound pet owners will opt for a professional pet sitter or dog walker rather than a kennel, boarding or day-care facility when making plans for four-legged family members. But buyer beware, as “all pet sitters are not created equal,” cautions Paul Mann, founder and CEO of FETCH! Pet Care, a provider of professional daily dog walking/fitness and pet-sitting services.

For those who desire to hire an at-home pet sitter so that their animals can maintain a routine, Fetch! Pet Care offers this Top 10 checklist for selecting a professional pet-sitting service:

- 1.** Locate a pet sitter in your area using a reputable source.
- 2.** Diligently check all of the pet sitter’s references – at least three should be voluntarily provided – and ensure you can find positive online reviews.
- 3.** Confirm that your sitter has undergone a criminal background check and has received proper training.
- 4.** Ensure the sitter offers a free in-home consultation, and pre-

interview the sitter with your pet(s) present to observe interactions and establish a “comfort level” between you, the sitter and your pet(s).

- 5.** Clearly state how you would like the sitter to use his/her “visit time” in terms of walking, playing, exercising, feeding, cleaning, etc.
- 6.** Verify that the sitter can accommodate your pet’s daily feeding, walking and exercise schedule, as well as your desired vacation schedule, even during the busiest holidays.
- 7.** Ensure the company offers seven-day-per-week telephone and email availability.
- 8.** Provide medical and behavioral history about your pet(s) as well as veterinary and other emergency contact information, and gather all necessary supplies, including food, vitamins, and treats in one central location.
- 9.** Ensure the company has “backup” measures in place should your primary pet sitter have an emergency that prevents him or her from performing your assignment.
- 10.** Ensure the pet sitter is fully bonded and insured and offers a satisfaction guarantee.

