



Fiona Fearon looks at an innovative dog-minding service that provides a great alternative to leaving your beloved pet at a boarding kennel.

holidays without

# tears

**G**oing on holidays should be fun, but if you leave Fido in a kennel you'll probably both spend most of the time fretting for one another. Few places let you share your canine companion with other holiday-makers, so one option is having someone care for your dog in their home, like a baby-sitting service.

## Kennel catastrophe

Animal lover Meredith Perko knows how difficult it is to find good care. While on holidays several years ago, she phoned the boarding kennel where her Jack Russells, Avril and Obi, were staying to ensure they were all right. "Yeah, they're fine," said the receptionist, without checking. Meredith felt uneasy. Avril was a fussy eater, and Obi was a fretter. At least, thought Meredith, they'll be in the same enclosure. Wrong. When Meredith collected them, it was obvious they'd had a bad time, and Avril had stopped eating altogether.

## A friendly carer

That's when she heard about a new pet-minding service called Don't Fret Pet. They soon matched her with a woman named Maureen, who lived just around the corner.

Advantages	Disadvantages
A home away from home for your dog	Dog might damage someone else's home
More personalised care than a kennel	Dog could get confused being in new home
Around the same cost as a kennel	Dog might try to escape
Carer's home is often nearby	Minders don't get paid much
Minder is often home all day with your pet	Minder's dog, if any, could get jealous
Suitable for	Not suitable for
Dogs who love company	Dogs who like to run away or explore
Fussy dogs who thrive on TLC	Dogs who like to dig up gardens
Dogs who fret for their owners and vice versa	Dogs who chew everything in sight
Very young, old or sick dogs	Aggressive breeds

## APPROXIMATE COST

These prices may vary depending on size and type of dog

	Sydney	Brisbane
Per night for first month	\$20	\$18
Per night for the next month	\$18	\$16
Per night for any additional nights	\$16	\$14

Also, each dog from the same family is charged half the rate of the first dog if cared for by the same minder.

"When we had been away for a few days, we phoned Maureen for an update," Meredith said. "The dogs had been playing ball, had just had a bath and were now eating lunch." They were even more spoiled than at home!

Now, four years later, Meredith still uses Don't Fret Pet when she goes away and has become a dog carer, too.

She gets paid just \$6 a day for her trouble but says she does it not for the money but because she loves dogs.

Don't Fret Pet has been operating in Sydney since 1993 and in Brisbane for a few months. Other cities will follow. The service was started by Jenny Brearley, who realised it was needed when she moved from Melbourne to Sydney.

All 150 minders are dedicated dog lovers who have been screened and have dog-friendly homes with secure fencing.

Don't Fret Pet is selective about which dogs it takes, and dog owners are invited to take their pet to the 'surrogate' home to meet the family. Owners supply bedding, toys and food or funding to purchase the regular food the dog eats. Dogs must have current vaccinations.

The company carries public liability insurance and minders will take your pet to a veterinarian in case of illness. And if you don't find the service up to scratch, you'll receive a refund. Contact Don't Fret Pet on 1300 307 021.

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