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## Holidaying with your pet

With the growing trend being to take your pet on holiday, a lot of destinations have altered their policies to welcome family pets. There is a range of pet-friendly accommodation around Australia, from bed and breakfasts to resorts, camping grounds to private hotels.



In Australia, domestic animals i.e. dogs, cat etc. are banned from National Parks, Nature Reserves, Aboriginal areas and State Recreation Areas because they are potentially dangerous to the native wildlife and animals. However, there are some forests that will allow dogs for visits during the day and overnight camping. During a visit to one of these areas your dog must be controlled and on a lead at all times. You should contact the relevant governing body before your visit.

You should always contact the destination before departing on holiday, there are often conditions relating to pets staying that you may need to know about, including the type of animals allowed, time of year permitted, bedding arrangements etc.

You should take some identification for your pet on your next holiday, for example your registration papers and vaccination card. Some owners also find it reassuring to take a print out of the animal's medical history in case a visit to a local vet is required at your travel destination.



Always take a towel/towels with you for your pet, even if you are not expecting to be near water during the holiday. You can use this if they get wet, require a bath, or get sick.

Ensure that your pet has a collar on him/her at all times and that attached is an ID tag with the animals name, your name, address and phone number. Some travellers find it useful to use editable tags so that they can record the address of their accommodation whilst on holiday.



Animals can easily become stressed in a new environment and this can affect their behaviour, digestive patterns and thus affect you and your pet's enjoyment of the holiday. Even little things like a familiar blanket, toy or bed can help ease the animal into the new surroundings.

You should consider visiting the vet before taking your pet on holiday. The vet can do a check-up of the animal's health, recommend any vaccinations required for the area you are visiting and provide you with a print out of your pet's medical history in case of an emergency.

Respect the rules of your travelling destination, especially regarding your pet. It is a privilege to take your furry companion on holiday with you and the better behaved the pet, the more likely accommodation venues across the country will open their doors to animals.

**Source:** <http://www.australianexplorer.com/pets/holiday.htm>

## Indoor vs Outdoor Cats

From first time kitten owners to seasoned cat companions, cat owners are divided whether or not cats should be allowed outdoors. Traditional beliefs that cats need freedom to roam are fading in the light of statistics that indicate the indoor cats have a longer life span and better health.

On average, an indoor cat lives twelve years but some cats can live for as many as twenty years. In comparison, an outdoor cat's life expectancy is less than five years.

The advantages of keeping a cat indoors outnumber the disadvantages of an indoor cat. Most are directly related to the health and safety of the cat.

The first valid reason to make a cat an indoor pet is traffic. Busy highways, roads, suburban streets and country lanes all present a life-threatening danger for cats. One accident can be fatal or cause serious injuries let alone the financial contribution required from the owner.

Indoor cats are not exposed to the host of poisons that many outdoors cats encounter. Pesticides, home garden products, car and motor products, discarded trash, spoiled foods, poisonous plants and intentional poisonings are among the poisoning dangers for cats that roam.

Danger of contracting an infectious disease rises for the outdoor cat. Many feline diseases including Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukemia (FeLV) are transmitted from an infected cat to another. Cats who roam at will encounter other cats and can contract either of these fatal diseases. Free roaming cats often encounter problems with other cats in the area and abscesses as a result of a cat fight are an ailment veterinarians see on a regular basis. These are painful to the cat and can be costly to fix.

Parasites are another health issue for outdoor cats. Fleas are prevalent through the world and can be carriers for disease. Some diseases can be transmitted to cat owners.

Outdoor cats face other dangers. Dogs and wild animals such as possums and snakes often prey on cats that wander into the wrong territory. Australia has deadly snakes that can quite easily kill a cat.

Outdoors cats are more prone to becoming lost. Less than 5% of cats taken to animal shelters are reclaimed by owners. All outdoor cats should wear safety collars with identifying information. However, collars often become lost. Micro-chipping is the only permanent way to identify a cat.

Neighbours who object to a roaming cat who may defecate or urinate in a flower bed or vegetable garden are another problem solved with indoor cats. Neighbourhood spats often arise from issues involving cats – if a cat lives indoors, then the potential for neighbour trouble is diminished.

And, let us not forget the danger that outdoor cats present to our native wildlife. Many people don't give a second thought to what their cat gets up to once they have locked them out at night. What they don't realise is that even the most docile of cats will prey on and kill native wildlife because of their natural hunting instincts.

Cat owners should also consider that indoor cats are healthier, often happier, and live much longer than outdoors cats allowed the freedom to roam. Many councils in Australia now have regulations in place for roaming cats, so it's important to ensure that you check with your local council for their rules pertaining to outdoor cats.

Traditional views that cats require the freedom to roam outdoors have few pros. The belief that indoor cats tend to be lazy and overweight is not true and can be combated with scheduled play times. Outdoor cat enthusiasts claim cats love the outdoors, which is often true, but the dangers outweigh the benefits. The same cat owners who promote the outdoors often insist that cats deserve their freedom.

Such views, however, are outdated and outranked by most animal professionals. The majority of veterinarians believe cats should be indoor pets. So do members of most Humane Societies and animal protection societies. Dangers to an outdoor cat far outweigh any benefits and responsible cat owners are urged to do what is best for the cat.

### Compromising:

Cat owners uncertain about keeping a pet indoors can give their cat the best of both worlds by offering outdoor experiences in controlled situations. Contrary to what most cat owners may think, it is possible to train a cat to a leash and harness. It is easier to train a kitten or young cat but all cats can be leash trained. This allows cats to be walked in the same manner as many dogs and offers outdoor exercise beneficial for both cat and owner.

Perhaps the best solution of all is a cat enclosure where cats can enjoy the outdoors in a safe environment. Many companies manufacture cat enclosures but cat owners can also create their own. A cat enclosure is simply an enclosed

area that offers protection and keeps the cat from wandering away. An ideal cat enclosure will contain enough space to move, climbing options, and a resting area. A shady area is best so that the cat can enjoy fresh area even on the warmest days. Every cat enclosure should be covered with material that can't be breached by the cat. Nylon mesh and chicken wire are two of the most inexpensive, effective options. Concerns about formerly outdoor cats adapting to indoor life are valid but a cat enclosure often solves this potential problem.

**Source:** <http://www.cat-world.com.au/indoor-vs-outdoor-cats>

## Untangling Tangles and Mats

By: Katrina Bristow

There are many different reasons a dog's coat will become tangled and matted. Dead coat and undercoat, dirt, burrs, grass seeds and incorrect grooming tool choice are just a select few reasons your furry family member may be in a bit of a tangle. Here are some important points to remember when dealing with a matted coat.

- Select your tools according to the state of your pets coat and coat type;
- Decide whether you will tackle the mats and tangles before or after bathing and cleaning your pet;
- Arm yourself with a detangling agent (Secret Weapon or other products available at pet supply stores);
- Allow a reasonable amount of time to groom out your pets coat. You may require several smaller time slots for particularly matted dog that will need to be groomed in sections rather than trying to get all the mats out at once;
- Have a comfortable table/area to groom your pet and secure your pet, if necessary, for their safety to ensure they do not fall off the table etc.

Now you are ready to tackle some mats. As time consuming as it may be, each matt needs to be tackled individually to reduce pain to your pet and damage to your pets coat.

### Tool selection

For knots and tangles combs, brushes and slicker brushes are usually sufficient to remove the dead coat and untangle the knots.

For the larger matted areas specific matt breakers and splitters may be required to help reduce the size of the matt and which will then allow you to brush it out section by section. Care should be taken with grooming tools as they may have blades such as matt breakers and splitters.

### Preparing a coat for de-matting

Using a detangling agent apply it to the affected area ensuring that the product coats and goes through the entire matt, you will need to work it in with your hands. A product such a Secret Weapon could be used in its concentrated form for this purpose and again diluted into your shampoo for bathing. Once the product is through the entire matt you will need to start to break through the matt to section it down in to smaller easier portions to brush out.

Once your detangling phase is complete you are ready to bathe your pet. Using a good quality shampoo and conditioner can help prevent further build-up of mats in your pets coat alongside regular grooming sessions each week to ensure these mats do not reform over time.

### Kat's tips:

- Ensure your pet is completely dry after bathing and a damp coat is more likely to tangle up again and will attract more debris such as burrs/grass seeds as a wet coat is more "sticky".



- Brushing and combing your pet from top to tail 2-3times a week should dramatically reduce any tangles and matting if your furry friends coat.
- Double coated breeds such as Rough Collies, Malamutes, Siberian Huskies etc. need their coats "stripped out" throughout the year to reduce the build-up of dead undercoat, if it is not removed it becomes stuck in the new coat growth and becomes matted, so much so sometimes they need to be clipped completely short.

If this all seems a little too overwhelming to manage at home, or you simply do not have the time regularly to dedicate to your pets coat health then perhaps making regular appointments with one of our experienced and friendly groomers is a better option for you. We can help advise you of the best regime for your pet in relation to your lifestyle and general activities you like to do with your pet, and help maintain and happy and healthy pet for you.

## When It's Time to Say Goodbye

By: Michael Kile

Loss is one of life's most difficult lessons. So saying goodbye to our special four-legged friends is one of the biggest challenges for pet-owners. Yet consciously reflecting on that inevitable day, ironically, can have real benefits. It not only helps to prepare us emotionally, but also enhances the relationship we have with our pets in the present moment.



Whether they are facing advanced age or a terminal illness, we have an obligation to maintain the best life possible for them. But how to decide when symptoms have reduced their quality of life to an intolerable level? How to determine if recommended treatment will maintain it, and not merely longevity at any cost? Are potential improvements worth the risk? When should we abandon treatment?

Owners should strive to focus on their pet's quality of life, as hard as it often can be at this time. Assess your pet regularly on (say) a five point scale – e.g.: pain, diet, hygiene, mobility, and mood - from 1 to 5, with five the top score.

With careful observation – on a monthly, weekly, daily, or hourly basis as required - end-of-life decisions can be made more objective. A disciplined approach - combined with advice from your vet - will help you avoid futile medication, over-treatment and premature euthanasia.

Modern pain management and high-tech medicine – combined with your dedicated nursing care - can restore and maintain quality of life; and extend the precious period between a terminal illness diagnosis and death.



Owners also should be aware that they may find themselves going through at least four stages of grieving – denial, anger, depression, guilt - before acceptance.

My dog, Sam, (pictured), struggled with chronic arthritis during his last twelve months.

Then aged 14, he managed quite well with anti-inflammatory medication. Energetic walks were no longer possible, only six blocks and then two. Not an easy time for him, with two bee stings on paws while walking.

Sam's hind legs began to buckle while eating from a bowl on the ground in April this year, an ominous sign of degenerative myelopathy, a progressive disease of the spinal cord in older dogs. Soon he could eat and drink only in sitting or reclining

position. His mobility and balance deteriorated with falls and incontinence more frequent, requiring vigilant observation both inside and outside the house.

But it was canine cognitive disorder - which became apparent around the same time with compulsive nocturnal circling and disorientation - that defeated us in the end. CCD medication was an option, but not tried after researching its effectiveness and noting side effects.

By early June, Sam's daily behaviour and mobility had deteriorated to such a degree I was forced to accept the inevitable and act out of compassion. He left this precious life at the age of 15 during a painless home euthanasia performed by a mobile vet.

Rescued in 2000 by a friend from Swan Animal Haven aged about 4 months - after being abandoned one dark and stormy night on Great Eastern Highway with serious mange - he was a lucky dog. And a happy tail-wagging one who brought a smile to the face of many a passer-by, which made sharing the past decade with him a double joy.

Geoff Page's poem describes part of his character well.

*"Whether, on your way through life,  
you choose to run or walk or jog;  
there's quite a lot that can be learned  
from a certain sort of dog."* (Geoff Page)

Remember there is no right answer when it comes to making end-of-life decisions, only what makes sense for you and your family – and your beloved pet.

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