

Farm Sitting Agreement

Earthshine Farm

11211 Beckley Rd

Quincy, IN 47456

502-649-1139

Today's Date: _____

Address of property where service is taking place: Homeowner(s): _____

Sitter Name(s): _____

_____ Service Date(s): _____

_____ Start Time: _____

End Time: _____

Person(s) to contact in case of emergency: _____

Emergency telephone number(s): _____

Emergency vet: _____

Emergency vet telephone: _____

LIVESTOCK (list the livestock on this property and their quantity):

[illegible]

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS (include medication instructions, feeding instructions, and anything else you feel is important during your pet's stay, etc): _____

[illegible]

1. The homeowner gives the house sitter permission to occupy the above premises as long as they abide by the conditions of this agreement.
2. No person/s or pet/s other than those listed in this agreement are permitted to live at the premises during the term of this agreement.
3. This is not a lease. Both parties agree that the house sitter only has a license to occupy the premises according to the terms and conditions of this agreement and has no legal interest in the premises. At the end of this term, the house sitter may continue to occupy the premises under the same terms of this agreement only if given permission to do so by the homeowner.
4. If the homeowner requires the house sitter to make rental payments, then this agreement needs to be adjusted and extended to cover these arrangements.
5. All parties to this agreement should have their own copy of this agreement, which should be signed by every person who is party to this agreement.

1. Access to the premises

1.1 The homeowner agrees:

- to provide the house sitter with at least fourteen days' notice of any change to the agreed first day of the house sitting assignment
- to provide the house sitter with seven days notice of an inspection of the premises
- that the premises will be vacant and in a habitable condition for the house sitter to move in on the agreed first day of the house sitting assignment

The homeowner, or any person authorized in writing by the homeowner, may only enter the premises during the terms of this agreement in the following circumstances:

- in an emergency (including to make urgent repairs)
- if the premises seem to be abandoned
- for any other purpose, if the house sitter agrees

1.2 The house sitter agrees:

- to be responsible for any act by any person the house sitter allows on the premises who breaks any terms of the agreement
- not to sub-let the premises without the homeowner's prior written permission
- not to allow any person not listed in this agreement to live on the premises without the homeowner's written permission

2. Care of the premises

2.1 The homeowner agrees:

- to ensure that the premises are reasonably clean and fit to live in

- to provide the house sitter or the homeowner's nominated contact person with a set of spare keys for the premises

2.2 The house sitter agrees:

- not to use the premises, or allow the premises to be used, for any illegal purpose
- not to cause a nuisance or allow a nuisance to be caused on the premises
- not to interfere, or allow others to interfere with the reasonable peace, comfort, or privacy of neighbors
- not to keep any animal on the premises other than those listed in this agreement without the permission of the homeowner
- not to block any sink or drain
- not to purposefully cause or allow any damage to be caused to the premises
- to clean up after self
- to report any infestation of the premises to the homeowner and seek advice for solutions to the problem
- to notify the homeowner as soon as possible of any damage to the premises
- to leave the premises as nearly as possible in the same condition (fair wear and tear excepted) as at the start of this agreement
- to keep windows and doors locked where appropriate and ensure that any other security measures on the premises are used effectively

3. Care of Animals

Name and describe each animal to be covered by this agreement. Describe how you would like each animal to be managed on a day-to-day basis. Include details of any medications or special treatment that each animal requires.

3.1 The homeowner agrees:

- to describe in writing and in detail how any animals normally resident at the premises should be cared for
- to provide all food and sundry supplies (insect control and other medicine, bedding, exercising, and cleaning equipment) for the animals
- to reimburse the house sitter for any food and sundry supplies bought for the animals in the event provided supplies run out
- to make arrangements for payment for any services provided by a qualified veterinarian in the treatment and care of the homeowner's animals

3.2 The house sitter agrees:

- to make every reasonable effort to ensure the good health, comfort, safety, and happiness of the animals listed in this agreement
- to follow the homeowner's instructions as far as possible in the care of the animals listed in this agreement

4. Security Cameras & Recording Devices

If there are security cameras or other recording devices on the premises, the homeowner should declare this to the house sitter, so that the house sitter can give their consent.

4.1 Home Owner Declaration

Do you have any cameras or recording devices installed on the premises? (Please indicate all inside and outside locations and times active.)

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please list each location & time active:

4.2 House Sitter Declaration

I give consent to be filmed/recorded while on the premises.

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. Maintenance & Repairs

5.1 What are urgent repairs?

The homeowner agrees to make payment, either directly to the service provider or as a reimbursement to the house sitter, for the following urgent repairs:

- burst water service
- blocked or broken lavatory system
- serious roof leak
- gas leak
- electrical faults
- flooding or serious flood damage
- serious storm damage

- serious fire damage
- failure or breakdown of the gas, electricity, or water supply to the premises
- failure or breakdown of any essential service for hot water, cooking, heating, or laundering
- any fault or damage that causes the premises to be unsafe or not secure

5.2 Reimbursement for repairs

The homeowner agrees to pay the house sitter, within 14 days of the end of the house sitting assignment, any reasonable costs that the house sitter has incurred for making repairs to the premises so long as:

- the house sitter was not in breach of this agreement when the damage occurred
- the house sitter gives the homeowner, or their nominated contact, a reasonable opportunity to make the repairs
- the house sitter makes a reasonable attempt to have any appropriate tradesperson named in this agreement make the repairs
- the repairs are carried out, where appropriate, by licensed or properly qualified persons
- the house sitter gives the homeowner, or their nominated contact person, written details of the repairs, including receipts for any costs the house sitter has incurred

6. Staying in Contact

6.1 Homeowner's contact details

The homeowner agrees to provide the house sitter with contact details for use during the term of this agreement. These contact details, whether phone or fax numbers, postal or email addresses, should remain current and functional during the term of this agreement.

The homeowner can be contacted by the following methods during the term of this agreement:

Postal Address: _____ Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Alt. Phone Number: _____

Skype/Messenger/Other: _____

6.2 Nominated person's contact details

The **homeowner** may choose to nominate a third party to act on their behalf during the term of this agreement. This nominated contact person agrees to provide the house sitter with their contact details and to be readily contactable. Those details should remain current and functional for the term of this agreement.

The homeowner's nominated contact person can be contacted by the following methods during the term of this agreement:

Postal Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Alt. Phone Number: _____

Skype/Messenger/Other: _____

6.3 House sitter's contact details

The **house sitter** agrees to provide the homeowner or the homeowner's nominated contact person with their contact details and to be readily contactable. These details should remain current and functional for the term of this agreement.

The house sitter can be contacted by the following methods during the term of this agreement:

Postal Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Alt. Phone Number: _____

Skype/Messenger/Other: _____

7. Termination of Agreement

7.1 The Homeowner agrees:

- to give the house sitter at least fourteen days' notice of early termination of this agreement if the agreement has not yet started
- that early termination of the agreement less than fourteen days' notice forfeits their deposit
- that early termination of the agreement less than 48 hours prior to the agreement starting forfeits any deposits and payments made
- to give the house sitter at least 24 hours notice of an early termination of this agreement if the agreement has started
- that early termination of an agreement that has already started forfeits any deposits and payments made and a refund will **not** be issued

7.2 The House sitter agrees:

- not to live off the premises before the end of this agreement without written permission from the homeowner or nominated contact person
- to give vacant possession of the premises to the homeowner or nominated contact person's on the date of termination of this agreement

- to return all keys and other security devices on the date of termination of this agreement
- to provide the homeowner or nominated contact person with a forwarding address
- at the end of this agreement, the house sitter may continue to occupy the premises under the same terms of this agreement only if given permission to do so by the homeowner

7.3 Both parties agree:

- that if either party persistently breaches this agreement, then the innocent party may terminate this agreement on 24 hours notice that termination of this agreement does not affect the right of either party to recover any monies due under the terms of this agreement

8. Additional Terms

Liability:

- Earthshine Farm, its owner, and its staff are not liable for mortgages/rent, utilities, or any other costs related to home ownership during their stay.
- In no event shall Earthshine Farm, Earthshine Farm's owner, or the staff be liable for illnesses or injuries that arise during the stay or after the house sitter has left the home. **Earthshine Farm, Earthshine Farm's owner, nor the staff will be held liable for any injury, escape, or death of pet(s).** It is expressly agreed by the Owner and Earthshine Farm liability shall, in **no event**, exceed the lesser of the current chattel value of a dog of the same species or the sum of \$300.00 per animal.
- **I, the Homeowner, realize that occasionally pets get injured and I will be responsible for any veterinary bills incurred. I will also be responsible for medical treatment needed if my pet ingests or gets injured by any material or objects from items left by me for my pets.**

Payment & Cancellation:

A deposit of 25% is due at the time of booking and is fully refundable **up to 14 days prior to the start of the stay. Full payment is due no later than 48 hours prior to the start of the stay.** Any cancellations within 48 hours of the start of the stay are considered last minute and forfeit any deposits or payments made. **Any extra charges incurred during the stay are due at the end of the stay.**

Wi-Fi Policy:

It is understood that a requirement of housesitting is a high-speed internet connection. The homeowner will provide the network name & password prior to the start of the stay.

WI-FI Network Name:

Password:

Social Media:

Earthshine Farm retains the right to use any photographs and/or video taken during your pet(s) stay for commercial use on any and all social media platforms. I, the Owner, consent to photos and/or videos of my pet(s) being posted on Earthshine Farm's Facebook page and any and all other social media platforms associated with the business.

Medical Treatment Policy:

If my pet becomes ill or if the state of the animal's health otherwise requires professional attention, Earthshine Farm, in its sole discretion, may engage the services of a veterinarian or administer medicine or give other requisite attention to the animal, and the expenses thereof shall be paid by me, the Owner. This includes diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, and any other illness or injury. In the unlikely event that my pet should pass away during their stay, I understand the staff will make every effort to reach me. The remains will be held until there is contact with the Owner and directions given as to disposition.

Extended Care Policy

Nightly rates are based on a 24-hour time period from drop-off to pick-up. The following extended care rates may apply for each pet on the booking if the end time on the final day of the stay is more than 2 hours later than the start time on the first day of the stay.

2-8 additional hours: +50% of the nightly rate.

8+ additional hours: +100% of the nightly rate.

Owner further and expressly agrees that each and every of the foregoing provisions contained on this agreement above shall be in force and effect and shall apply to each and every occasion on which Owner boards or deposits Owner's pet(s) with Earthshine Farm; and that this agreement shall remain in full force and effect as between the parties until and unless otherwise canceled or superseded by a writing signed by both parties.

I have read and understand this agreement.

Signature of Owner or responsible party: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Sitter: _____ Date: _____

Appendix A

Before you go - checklist for homeowners

Homeowners - use this checklist to make sure you're ready to hand over the care of your home to your housesitter on the day that you leave.

1. Create an information pack

It's a good idea to put an information pack together containing all of the materials that your house sitter needs to provide top-quality care to your home. Your signed and completed house-sitting agreement will provide the cornerstone of your information pack. By placing all of your records in plastic A4 sheets in a sturdy folder, this pack can be used by your house sitters for years to come. Consider including the following in your information pack:

Contact information

If you would like to have a role in the management of your property while you're away you will need to leave your contact information. You may like to ask your house sitter to send you regular email updates on the status of your home and animals while you're away.

Emergency contact information

You may want to assign a friend, relative, or neighbor the role of nominated contact person to liaise with your house sitter in your absence. If so, leave enough of their contact information so that your house sitter can reach them at any time of the day or night. You need to establish how comfortable your nominated contact person is with the idea of making decisions on your behalf.

Visitors policy

If you have strong feelings about the numbers and types of people who may (or may not) visit your home with your house sitter's consent, include this information in your house-sitting agreement.

Rules and regulations

If your home is a condominium, a unit, or a rental property, you may want to leave a copy of the by-laws or lease for your house sitter to refer to.

Home contents out of bounds

You may like to make a list of items you don't want your house sitter to use (add this to your house-sitting agreement).

Rooms out of bounds

You may like to write a list of any areas or rooms in your house or on your property that you don't want your house sitter to use (add this to your house-sitting agreement).

2. Telling others you're leaving

It's crucial that other people know about your arrangements with your house sitter to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

Neighbors

Let your neighbors, friends, and family know that you have a house sitter moving into your home on a particular date.

Insurance

Contact your insurance company to let them know you will have a house sitter moving into your home. Your home and contents premium should be unaffected by this information.

Service providers

If you've negotiated with your house sitter to keep some of your usual services running while you're away, it's important to tell your service providers (maid, gardener, groundskeeper, etc) about your house-sitting arrangement.

3. Preparing your home

Your home is like a ship and you are like its captain. Before you go, you need to get it shipshape both for your house sitter and for your own return.

Store your breakables

Stash away your breakables in a secure area such as a locked cupboard or your attic space. This can include anything made of glass or ceramics that you value (such as framed photographs, sculptures, trophies, vases, artworks, and even a favorite snowglobe). Accidents do happen, but they don't need to happen to your breakable treasures.

Store your valuables

It is only common sense to store your valuables in a secure locked area while you're away. If your valuables are especially expensive then you need to maintain your usual security precautions in your absence. Make an inventory of your valuables before you go. Put your wine collection and bar supplies well out of sight of your house sitter.

Clean your home and yard

It's a good idea to ensure your house and grounds are clean and tidy in preparation for your house sitter's arrival.

Perishable foodstuffs

You may want to empty your refrigerator of any perishable foodstuffs. Although your house sitter is probably happy to eat or otherwise dispose of these!

Shut down parts of your home

If your home is larger than your house sitter needs you may want to shut parts of it down (for example, you could make all but one bedroom and bathroom off-limits to your house sitter) just so that these parts of the house remain in pristine condition for your return.

4. Preparing your vehicles

When you go away you may be leaving a car, SUV, RV, boat, bicycle or tractor behind to face a period of disuse. (Note: Earthshine Farm does **not** permit the use of client vehicles nor will we maintain them).

Use of your vehicle

If you are happy to have your house sitter use your vehicle while you're away you need to do the following: - familiarize them with your vehicle before you go - add their name to your motor vehicle insurance policy - have them confirm in writing that they will be liable for any costs and damages incurred while using your vehicle including paying any excess fees on any resulting insurance claim (this can be added to your house sitting agreement). - provide local driving regulation information for their reference

Maintenance of your vehicle

You may want to have your vehicle maintained in your absence. This could include asking your house sitter to start your car once a week and/or clean your car of leaves, dust and bird droppings.

Use of your bicycle

You may be happy for your house sitter to use your bicycle. Familiarise your house sitter with any security locks you may use including combination numbers and spare keys.

Remote control devices

Be sure to leave your garage door opener or similar device out in plain sight to allow your house sitter access to your garage.

5. Preparing your animals

Take the time to prepare your animals for your departure, thoroughly pet-proof your home, and educate your house sitter in the finer points of caring for your pets. This process is crucial to ensuring the house-sitting assignment is a success for every party (your animals included). Please see the companion checklist: Before you go - checklist for pet owners.

6. Preparing to travel

A few simple preparations can make being away from home a snap!

Email

If you are currently using an email address that is dependent on your home internet service provider, you may need to set up a new address that can travel with you. There are many hundreds of good, free email service providers you can sign up with in less than five minutes. Choose a service provider that gives each member account enough disk space to store, send and receive jpg (image) files.

Inventory of valuables

Make an inventory of your valuables before you go and store it in a secure place (such as with a relative, a solicitor, or in an online digital safe). Note that this list does not go in your house sitter's information pack.

7. Services

Your house sitter needs to know everything about your home's usual services in order to keep everything sailing along.

Trash collection

Make a note of which day your trash is collected. Provide plenty of trash bags of the right size and strength.

Recycling services

Make a note of the day your recycling is collected. Have any recycling equipment available for your house sitter to use. Let your house sitter know what can and can't be recycled through your kerbside collection service.

Subscriptions

You may want to suspend or cancel any magazine or newspaper subscriptions you may have. You may want to suspend or cancel your satellite or cable TV service. You may want to suspend or cancel your DVD rental subscription.

You may want to suspend or cancel any regular home deliveries you may have including dairy products and organic vegetables. You may want to suspend or cancel visits by your regular cleaner, gardener, or lawn mower.

8. Your house sitter's needs

House sitters are people too and they will need the facilities to live their own lives in your home as well as enough information to settle into your home and neighborhood quickly and easily.

Spare keys

Leave a set of spare keys with your nominated contact person (if you have one). Your house sitter will need their own set of your keys plus a spare set.

Childcare

Leave details on local childcare facilities and places of fun for your younger house sitters.

Tourist information

Mark up a local map with some of the area's best assets for your intrepid house sitter. Include your local supermarket, library, internet cafe, cinema, DVD rental shop, dog park etc.

Transport maps

Local transport maps covering travel by bicycle, bus, train, tram and underground are invaluable for helping your house sitters get oriented.

Storage space

You may need to empty some cupboards and drawers for your house sitter to stow their belongings.

Clean linen

Put out clean bed linen and towels for your house sitter.

Parking

Describe what parking is allowed on or near your property including costs and restrictions. You may be able to arrange for a visitor parking permit for your house sitter to use during their stay.

Local driving information

Provide local driving regulation information for your house sitter's reference.

9. Utilities

(Note: Earthshine Farm is **not** financially responsible for utilities.)

Your utilities will need to be paid for in your absence, either by you or the house sitter (depending on what financial arrangements you have agreed to). Regardless of who pays for the utilities however, your house sitter will need to know everything about maintaining these critical elements in your home.

Gas and electric

Leave instructions for the safe use of your electricity and gas services. Show your house sitter where the relevant meters are as well as the fuse boxes and cut-off switches. Take meter readings on your last day in the property so that your house sitter's share of the utility bills can be worked out on your return.

Heating and air-conditioning

Leave detailed instructions on how to program the heating and air-conditioning systems. Show your house sitter where the relevant heating and air-con switches and thermostats are.

Water and drains

Leave instructions on the location of your water mains tap and the access area to your drains system in case of emergency or routine maintenance.

Laundry appliances

It's amazing how quirky and bad-tempered your laundry appliances can get with age. Leave instructions for your house sitter on how to keep on the right side of your washing machine and dryer.

10. Grounds maintenance

(Note: Earthshine Farm does **not** offer ground maintenance)

Only you know just how much loving your outside space needs in your absence.

Compost

Make a list of what you would and wouldn't like your house sitter to add to your compost.

Pool maintenance

Have your pool equipment and chemicals available for your house sitter to use. Attach clear written instructions to these.

Garden tools

Make sure your garden tools are accessible. Leave a copy of your shed keys for your house sitter.

Indoor plant maintenance

Leave any supplies for your indoor plants out for your house sitter. Attach written instructions to these.

Lawn maintenance

Check that your lawnmower is in good working order. Leave a spare can of fuel for your lawn mower if required. Attach hoses to outdoor water supplies for watering your garden and lawn. Leave rakes and a wheelbarrow out for your house sitter.

Bird feeders

Leave enough wild seed to keep your bird feeders topped up while you're away.

11. Security

Your usual security systems and precautions should continue unabated in your absence. Your house sitter will make every effort to conscientiously protect your home and household contents in all the ways that you describe.

Security systems

If you have an alarm system, you may need to make arrangements with the security company for a code and security password specifically for your house sitter to use. Security systems can be very tricky (and noisy) so be sure to tell your house sitter how to manage your alarm system in exact detail.

Security cameras and/or recording devices

If you have cameras or recording devices on your property, you must declare this to the house sitter before the assignment starts, so that this can be discussed and that there are no surprises. We have tried to help by including a special declaration regarding this in our "House sitter agreement" document. In this section, you can declare the locations of these devices as well as the times of operation. Also, house sitters can declare whether they consent to the homeowner operating the devices or not.

Window locks and security doors

Any keys for window locks and security doors should be left with your house sitter.

Phew! Well done...you've made it to the end of this list.

Now you can leave your home knowing that your house sitter is exceptionally well-prepared to take on their duties and responsibilities toward you, your property, and your animals. Relax and go.

Appendix B

Before you go - checklist for pet owners.

Your animals' special needs, health, and safety need to be both documented and provided for while you're away. Your house sitter is prepared to make your animals' health and happiness a top priority but they can't do their best by Spot and Fluffy without all the necessary information and preparation by you. At the last count (in 2003) there were 77.7 million pet cats and 65 million pet dogs in the US. (Phew, I think our house sitter members are going to be busy!) For the purposes of this checklist, I've assumed that your beloved pet is either a cat or a dog (sorry to all you bird, rabbit, mouse, fish, snake, and pony owners but you will have to customize parts of this checklist for yourselves).

1. Create an information pack

It's a good idea to put an information pack together containing all of the information that your house sitter needs to provide top-quality care to your pets. By placing all of your animals' records in plastic A4 sheets in a sturdy folder, this pack can be used by your house sitters for years to come. Consider including the following in your information pack:

- up-to-date immunization records
- microchip or tattoo information
- lost pet register contact information
- municipal license or registration records
- medical history (including last dates of de-flea and de-worming treatment)
- current medication (including generic names of drugs, dosage information, and your usual supplier)
- vet's contact information
- after-hours animals medical emergency service contact information
- photograph of your pet that is both current and adequately detailed to identify them with
- map with the location of good dog parks and other permitted dog-walking areas

2. Educate your sitter

Knowledge is power. The more you can tell your house sitter about your animal's usual habits and quirks the more fine-tuned their care and attention can be toward your pets. Honesty is essential here. If your dog is antisocial around other dogs or is about to come into season tell your house sitter. If your dog is an 'escaper' when let off the lead or your cat is a scent-marker then you need to leave this information for your house sitter. It won't necessarily put your house sitter off the assignment. However, having to chase your dog through a large park or worrying about smelly furniture covers will only cause your house sitter undue stress. It's much better for every person (and animal) concerned if your house sitter is prepared for any eventuality. Take

the time to answer the following questions (where relevant) and print out your document to be added to your house sitter's information pack.

- What are the important routines in your pet's day (including eating, sleeping, exercising and playing)?
- Is your pet on a special diet? What amounts of food do they usually eat? When do they usually eat? How many treats are they usually permitted?
- Does your pet have any major and minor health problems (for example, skin allergies or old injuries)?
- Create an emergency health care plan (Which health care provider do you use? How do you get to the clinic? How will your house sitter make a payment for emergency care?)
- Where are your pet's favorite toys, chew toys, and treats kept?
- Where are your pet's favorite hiding places?
- Does your pet have any unusual habits (for example, your cat may regularly vomit, your puppy may urinate when showing submission, or your dog may try to leap out of open car windows)?
- Does your pet have any phobias or anxieties?
- Are any rooms or parts of the property 'off limits' for pets?
- Have a backup plan for the care of your animals in case your house sitter has an emergency they need to attend to. Leave the contact information for a vet boarding service, your local kennels, or a nearby friend or relative who could care for them if needed.
- How does your dog usually travel? (Are they allowed on public transport? Can they walk in the snow or on hot pavements? Do they have a car restraint? Are they happy to be in their travel container?)

2. Animal Supplies

Stock up on enough supplies to keep your animals happy and healthy while you're away (plus extra of everything in case your return is delayed). Leave your animals' supplies in one spot in plain sight for your house sitter's easy access. These supplies could include the following:

- food (main meals, dry food, treats, chewing bones)
- catnip
- food and water bowls
- medications (flea, tick, lice, heartworm, worm and mange treatment, with dosage information)
- toys (indoor chewing and tugging toys, chasing toys)
- exercise equipment (leads, balls, tennis racket, towels, cold weather gear, muzzles, collars, harness, snow boots)
- identification tags, tattoo or microchip (featuring a contact number or a number on a registration list - make sure these are current!)
- bedding (basket, mattress with pillows, blankets or duvet, spares for washing)

- cleaning equipment for your animal (medicated shampoo, towels, hoses, brushes, clippers, and scissors)
- cleaning equipment for your animals' messes in your home (mops, brushes, sponges, disinfectant)
- waste collection equipment (poop scooper, bags, gloves, kitty litter and trays)
- traveling equipment (car restraints, car blankets, travel containers)

3. Preparing your animals

By doing a few simple things for your animals you can leave knowing that they'll be that much more safe and secure in your absence.

- Deal with any suspected health problems in your animals before you go.
- Ensure your dog is comfortable walking on a leash.
- Make sure your pets are wearing practical collars that fit properly (collars shouldn't be too tight or so loose that they can slip off).
- Have an identification tag engraved with a current contact number for each of your pets. Attach these tags to the D-rings on your pets' collars with a sturdy steel ring.
- Register each of your pets with a lost pet register connected to your local animal shelter.
- Take digital photographs of each of your animals showing their markings and distinctive features.
- Ideally, your house sitter should spend some time with your pets in your company before you leave. Schedule some time to take your house sitter and your dogs out for a walk. Or your house sitter could just handle your animals in your presence to get everyone acquainted with each other before you go.
- Tell them when you'll be coming back home (some people believe that our pets understand these reassuring messages).

4. Preparing your home

While you know exactly what hazards your home contains, your house sitter doesn't, so it's a good idea to attempt to really 'pet-proof' your home before you leave.

- Put anything away that could be harmful to your pet. Christmas tree decorations, tinsel, pine needles, firewood, cooked bones (think gum and gut-perforating splinters and shards), strings, ribbon, or knitting wool are all potentially deadly to curious cats and dogs. Add pesticides, flavored medicines, digestion aids, sweetened pills, chocolates, confectionary, biscuits, space cookies, tobacco, and sweet liquors to this list.
- Your garage probably contains many hazardous substances such as rat poison and slug killer, fertilizers, antifreeze, and pesticides. It is critical to put any dangerous substances in your garage completely out of reach of your pets (preferably behind a locked door).
- Seal off any routes to your cellar or attic so that your pets don't become 'lost' in these hard-to-get-to spaces.

- Block your pets' usual escape routes from your property. You may need to repair holes in the fence or fill scraped-out depressions beneath fences or gates with heavy objects.
- Secure any gates on your property (including those to a swimming pool).
- Unplug any appliances that your house sitter won't be using to prevent possible accidents.
- Consider installing a door flap so that your animals can leave the house if they need to (for their toileting or in case of an emergency such as fire or flooding).
- Arrange your arsenal of cleaning equipment in plain sight for your house sitter. This can include your vacuum cleaner, mop, broom, dustpan, gloves, disinfectant, sponges, trash bags, etc.
- Just before you leave, ensure that the right pets are inside the house.
- If your pet escapes the house before you leave, tell your house sitter where to look for the animal.
- And lastly, leave a piece of your worn clothing in your pets' sleeping area to give them a nice reminder of their beloved human while you're away