

## Help Them Hold Onto Their Connections

Clearly, the most crucial step after a move is the making of new friends. It is a process that takes time, but one that parents can help with. Identifying your child's strengths, and talking with them about what things they enjoy, and what is important to them can help them find activities in their new town, and through those activities, can help them make new friends.

It is also important to work with their old and new schools to help make sure there is a smooth transition from one school to another. If they have special needs, it is important that their old school and new school talk, to help make the transition a smooth one. If there are any medical problems, getting copies of their old medical records can be helpful as well.

## Make Sure to Take Care of Yourself & Your Relationships

Moves are stressful for parents as well as for children, and you need to be taking care of yourself and your own relationships in order to have the energy and stability to help your children with their problems. Taking care of yourself will mean different things to different people. To some it may mean getting everything unpacked immediately. To others it may mean taking a night off to go to the movies, or taking everyone out to eat. It is also important to devote some time and energy to your relationship with your spouse, or with other adults. You will need support from other adults in order to provide support for your children.

## Realize that the Stress of a Move Can Be a Growth Experience for Everyone

Although moves are stressful, they are often looked back on as positive times, as times when the family was closer together, and less scattered by everyone's outside interests. You may remember this time right after the move as difficult, but also as a time when people discovered new interests and skills, and made important new friends.

Remember, although moves may be one of the greatest stresses for children, there are many things that you as a parent can do to help make sure that it is a stress that strengthens and enriches them, rather than one that puts them at increased risk.

by *Stuart A. Copans, M.D., Associate Professor, Dartmouth Medical School*

Dr. Copans is an Associate Professor at Dartmouth Medical School, and works with substance abusing adolescents at the Brattleboro Retreat. He is the author of a chapter on the effects of relocation on children in the *Basic Handbook of Child Psychiatry* (John Wiley and Sons, 1997) and is coauthor of a book for relocating families (*Smart Moves: A Guide Through the Emotional Maze of Relocation*, McCollum, Jensen, and Copans, Smith and Kraus, 1996).

## Moving in With Your Pet

*An Interview with Andrew Dworkis, D.V.M.*

### What can we do to prepare our pet for a move?

Make sure your pet is in the best possible physical condition. Before the move, schedule a check-up at a veterinarian clinic making sure your pet receives preventative treatments such as vaccinations and deworming.

Ask your veterinarian about regional diseases which a pet might encounter. With cats, there is a concern about their catching feline leukemia, which is a viral-transmitted cancer. In urban areas, where more cats are apt to run loose, there is a greater chance of transmission. Have a new ID tag made before you move. Pets are most often lost soon after a move, since they are confused about where home is.

### What special considerations should be made while traveling?

Before the long drive, acclimate your pet to travel by taking it on short trips, even if just to the store. When traveling, some of the same considerations given children apply to pets. Give them plenty of breaks. Anticipate thirst with conveniently carried water – chopped ice is just fine. Exercise your pet at the beginning of each day of travel, allowing enough time for the emptying of bladder and bowels. Restrict food intake to half portions at the end of the day.

When stopping to eat, arrange to have someone stay with the pet even if it means eating in shifts. Leaving pets in closed cars is dangerous. Heat prostra-

tion happens very rapidly. In making rest stops, go off the expressway or find an isolated stretch of highway to avoid the possibility of your pet contracting Parvo disease, a serious intestinal canine disorder, transmitted by dog stool. If you are going to stay in hotels or motels, check ahead regarding any pet restrictions.

### What should we do if we fly?

Travel by plane may mean some type of tranquilization for your pet. Don't feed your animal before the flight, but give it plenty of water. Arrange to have access to the baggage compartment to be able to provide exercise and water during layovers. Some airlines allow one small pet per plane to be stored under a seat. Check with the airlines.

Have correct documentation for air travel: certificates of vaccinations and medical checks; a medical history summary; interstate health certificates may be required by some carriers.

### What should we do for our pet once we get to our new home?

Make the transition smooth by helping to re-establish your pet's habits. When we break the usual patterns of activity, we can expect some different behaviors like aggressive acts or accidents in the house.

You might want to temporarily confine your pet to a smaller room or put your dog in a cage to prevent the accidents that could happen. For cats, reintroduce them to the litter box with placement of several throughout the new house for a week or so then gradually withdraw them. With any aged pet, going to the bathroom in the house might become a problem. Pets are creatures of habit and changes can cause anxiety.

### Is there anything that can be done to improve our new home for our pets?

View this from the animal's standpoint. Is there an easy exit to a bathroom area outside? Is the yard fenced? Is the litter box in an easily accessible place?

When outside, walk your pets along the property line. Let them become used to their territory. You may want to have a fence installed in your new home before you move in.

### Do you have any last words of advice?

A few. If there were pets in the house before, you might decide to fumigate to fend off possible parasitic problems. Odor problems can be solved or diminished by having a carpet company clean the rugs with an odor neutralizer prior to your moving in. Also, keep in mind a change in water with different mineral content could affect your pet.

