

## A few things to consider before going back to work

By

Martie Petrie and Ken Guild

Turn on any radio station, TV news show or internet news site and you'll find content peppered with the "big news" that the economy is finally turning a corner and rebounding. Before you start that next job, you may want to consider a few things that may not be good news to your pet now that you'll be out of the house for extended periods of time. Here are a few tips on how to ease yourself and your pet back into the workforce.

1. Make sure that if your pet is used to going on walks routinely at certain points throughout the day that you adjust your daily exercise regimen to mirror more closely the times, duration and paths you will take once you get back to work. This may mean getting up earlier, adjusting to a less strenuous or shorter path and being realistic about how much you'll really be able to fit in before and after going to work.
2. Reach out to your neighbors and friends. If some are "stay at home" or are still looking to get back into the workforce, these may be your allies for your pet's midday walk or just to check in on your pet if you'll be gone for extended hours to make sure he's adjusting well, has a full bowl of water and, in general, is ok.
3. Identify local pet-sitters. If you're starting a new job, chances are good that you won't have any paid time off for a while. This may become a challenge if your pet gets sick and you are not able to take proper care of him during the day. A pet sitter can come over and administer medicines as needed so that your routine and your pet's needs aren't interrupted.
4. Create a list of dog-walkers that are able to come on short notice. What if that afternoon meeting turns out to be more than the usual time? What if that means you're now going to catch more traffic on your way home, etc. Having a dog-walker that is able to help you out in a pinch by taking your dog to get his daily exercise and relieve himself could mean the difference between an already hectic day and a not so hectic evening because your pet has had the exercise he needs to get a good night's rest (meaning you'll be more apt to get one too).
5. Find out if there are services nearby your new work location such as doggy day care, grooming and pet transport that open early in the morning and close after "normal" business hours. These businesses may not seem as pricey if the convenience they offer is priceless to you and your pet.
6. Tap into any bartering opportunities you may be able to afford now that you're back among the employed. That friend of yours who can't afford to buy movie tickets because he's out of work may be able to watch your pet for a few hours if you're in a pinch in exchange for two tickets that your employer may offer their employees at a discount.
7. Practice leaving your pet alone for a ½ hour at first then build up the time to possibly seven to eight hours, depending on how long you'll be out of the house at work. This will make it easier on your pet to realize you are not abandoning him and will lessen the degree of potential separation anxiety caused by prolonged hours of being alone.
8. Find out about fostering. This may seem crazy as you're about to embark on a new responsibility and may think that taking on another is not going to make sense, but

maybe having a buddy around during the day will be a great tension reducer for your pet. It will also help you to know that your pet has a friend while you're away and that you're both saving a life in the process.

The key to easing back into the work-force is to remain as flexible as possible during the transition. Realize that this will be a challenge for you and your pet as you get used to a new routine. It doesn't have to be daunting if you plan ahead of time and make sure you let your pet know that you're not abandoning him.

*Martie Petrie and Ken Guild are Co-Founders of Ken-Mar Rescue, a Los Angeles based, 501c3, animal welfare organization. To adopt or become a foster parent, please go to [www.KenMarRescue.org](http://www.KenMarRescue.org). You too can help save a dog's life!*