



Gold Coast Pet Sitting through Pet Sitters International is pleased to provide pet owners with a checklist of pertinent information and questions to help in the pet sitter interview process.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting's answers are in green.

We encourage you to take some time early in the selection process to determine the pet sitter best suited for your situation. Once you've made the best selection, we hope you'll agree with the multitudes of other pet owners who say, "My pet sitter is worth her (or his) weight in gold!"

Tips for Conducting a Professional Pet Sitter Interview

Does the pet sitter (or agency) keep regular office hours?

✓ A Professional pet sitter should have a schedule of office hours. A larger business may have additional personnel to answer phone calls or e-mails, but many pet sitters are sole proprietors who use answering machines to field inquiries.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting's phone hours are from 8am until 6pm 7 days a week.

If you left a voicemail message or email inquiring about services, how soon was it returned?

✓ All phone calls and emails should be returned within 24 hours.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting tries to answer all correspondence the same day if not within 24 hours of receiving the inquiry.

How much notice does the pet sitter (or agency) need in order to schedule your request for a pet sitter?

✓ Most pet sitters request at least two weeks notice, but may be able to accommodate an occasional short-notice assignment. Sometimes there is an additional charge for short-notice assignments.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting would prefer as much in advance notice as possible by all clients and will try to accommodate last minute requests (new and current clients) where possible. Our cancellation policy is explained on our website.

Does the pet sitter (or agency) have established fees for pet care they can quote over the phone and/or in company literature?

✓ A professional pet sitter should have a published list of fees that cover the most common pet-care requests. Fees for special services may be worked out on a case-by-case basis.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting works out your fees on a case-by-case basis due to how we charge on time not number of pets. We also need to work out whether or not a travel fee applies and many other factors involved in helping customise the service for you and your situation.

Does the pet sitter have public liability insurance, police check and Australian Business Number?

✓ Ask for proof of coverage. These three items is what makes the difference between a "hobbyist" (someone who is doing this for extra cash) from a professional pet sitter. A professional pet sitter has the ultimate well-being of your pets and home as top priority thus the need for these items to help ensure peace of mind.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting and our representatives have a presentation booklet that we take to our meet n greets (initial consultation with clients) to show original copies of these three documents as well as offering photocopies.

Does the sitter have a clean criminal history? Is the police certificate current?

✓ Ask to see the original copy of the pet sitter's police check (certificate) or blue card. Official verification documents will contain current annual dates (within one year) and certified seals. Remember, the person you choose to hire will have access to your property and your beloved animal companion(s). This documentation can provide the peace of mind you seek when admitting a new pet-care provider to your home.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting and its representatives renew their police check certificates annually to ensure they are current. The original is available to view within the presentation booklet each Gold Coast Pet Sitting representative has available to view at each initial consultation.

Does the pet sitter meet with you and your pet(s) in advance? Is there a charge for this in-home meeting?

✓ Initial interviews allow the pet sitter to meet with you in your home, interact with your pets and discuss services and business policies. These visits are highly recommended for both pet owner and pet sitter. Some pet sitters offer this service at no charge, while others charge a nominal fee for their time and travel expenses.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting does the initial consultation for free (complimentary) however this is decided on a case-by-case basis (depending on factors such as travel time to/from consultation, length and type of booking, etc).

How much experience does the pet sitter have in caring for your particular type of pet?

✓ Experience in caring for special needs pets or unusual types of pets is helpful if that is what you need.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting and its representatives are quite active in their passion and knowledge of animals. We are "forever students" always reading books, participating within online forums, communicating with various online animal experts to constantly improve and keep our knowledge current.

Does the pet sitter willingly and happily provide references?

✓ Pet Sitters International recommends that all of its members have a list of references for potential clients to contact.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting representatives will have a list of available references for you to view within their presentation booklet at the initial consultation.

Does the pet sitter use a comprehensive service contract?

✓ A well-written contract outlines the details associated with each service the sitter will provide. The contract includes all fees along with the expected amount of time that will be spent with your pet(s). This ensures that both you and your sitter have agreed on and understand the level of service being provided in your absence

Gold Coast Pet Sitting will send to you via email the service contract for you to fill out upon booking with us. Due to how we operate, we can customise the contract to your requirements.

How much time does the pet sitter spend in your home to care for your pet(s)?

✓ The average in-home visit to care for one pet is 30 minutes, but additional time may be required if you request special services such as dog walking, pet grooming, etc. or have a multiple pet household.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting will spend a minimum of 30 minutes for any pet sitting bookings. Please contact us to inquire about the minimum time “guarantee” we offer for all other services.

Does the pet sitter have a web site that you may peruse?

✓ Many professional pet sitters have web sites to communicate with current and potential clients. It is an excellent way to provide information to pet owners and to offer the option of e-mail communication between owners and sitters. Also, check to see when the website was last updated.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting is currently (as of June 2010), the only local professional pet sitting company that has a dynamic website that has a blog and is linked with Facebook, Twitter and other social networks.

What contingency plan does the pet sitter have in the event of inclement weather or natural disaster while caring for your pet(s)?

✓ Every professional pet sitter should have a written Disaster Plan that addresses natural or man-made disasters, as well as a contingency plan to provide for your pet’s care if anything prevents the sitter from completing the assignment.)

Gold Coast Pet Sitting can explain our Disaster Plan upon request. This is also covered in our comprehensive service contract.

What does the pet sitter do if medical care is needed for your pet?

✓ Arrangements should be made with your veterinarian and/or local emergency veterinary clinic to allow the sitter to seek medical attention for your pet while you are away.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting covers for emergency as well as non-emergency care procedures within our comprehensive service contract.

How does the pet sitting company or agency screen and train their pet sitters?

✓ When a pet-sitting business owner uses staff sitters, a careful employment screening process should be used to ensure that any of the company’s personnel who care for your pet are trained and equipped to provide the high-quality care you and your pet deserve.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting has quite an extensive application process before a person is offered to become a representative (pet sitter/dog walker). Even after application, all applicants are on a three month trial before finally being officially listed as a worker with Gold Coast Pet Sitting.

During the in-home interview, does the pet sitter exhibit a positive attitude and seem comfortable and competent in caring for your pet(s)?

✓ A positive attitude goes hand in hand with experience when it comes to in-home pet care. As a result, you can feel at ease and look forward to the in-home pet-care a professional pet sitter provides.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting hopes this is your experience when you meet with our representative at your initial consultation.

How will the pet sitter confirm your safe return home for the care of your pet(s)?

✓ Your pet sitter should contact you to confirm that you have returned home at the expected time or ask that you call to confirm your return.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting requires all clients to contact us to ensure their safe return home. This procedure is highlighted within our comprehensive service contract.

Will the pet sitter provide you with an evaluation or rating form of their services?

- ✓ A service rating form is the hallmark of a professional pet sitter who wants to ensure client satisfaction.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting will request your feedback shortly after completion of service.

What are the payment terms?

- ✓ Some pet sitters require payment in full for first time customers while others require a deposit upon reservation and balance paid at the end of the assignment. There is no industry standard for payment terms, so be sure you understand in advance the terms of the pet sitting business you utilize.

Gold Coast Pet Sitting has our payment procedures and policies available to view at your leisure on our website. Generally, payment is required up-front.

When you engage the services of a professional pet sitter, use this checklist and make sure all of your questions are answered to your satisfaction. This ensures that you can leave your beloved pets with the peace of mind knowing that they will be well cared for. That's a win-win-win situation for you, your pets and your pet sitter.

©2007 Pet Sitters International (used with permission as a member of the organisation)