

# Important tips to remember when picking a military family-friendly pet

MERI RETTINGER

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Have you decided to make a furry addition to your family? Military families are more turbulent than civilian families due to frequent moves, new housing situations and deployments. Be responsible and consider the following when adding a pet to your military family. The last thing you want to do is take your pet to the pound because your next duty station is overseas, or your new housing will not allow pets.

**Size** - Most likely you will move quite frequently. The size of your pet will definitely matter. Some newer military housing units are banning pets. If this becomes the case at your next duty station, take into consideration whether or not you will be able to afford an apartment. Most apartments will allow pets under 25 pounds for a nominal fee. Larger pets come with a larger deposit or are sometimes not allowed at all.

**Breed** - Do you have or plan to have children? Some dogs have short tempers and nip easily. Some larger breeds such as Pit Bulls and Rottweilers now require a minimum of \$100,000 homeowners insurance per dog in military housing. (Both Pit Bulls and Rottweilers are prohibited here at Fort Bliss). This can be an added expense that not everyone thinks of when picking out that cute puppy. Some dogs require two or three walks a day if they do not have adequate yard space to run. If are prepared and know this in advance it can be a relaxing part of your day.

**Your lifestyle** - The most important thing to think about when picking out a family pet is the military lifestyle.

- While your apartment or base housing in Norfolk accepts pets, will your apartment or housing accept pets in San Diego? Are you willing and able to pay extra fees that come with pet deposits every two to three years due to frequent moving?

- PCSing from one duty station to another is always stressful. Can you handle a pet and the additional hotel fee for pet deposits? Keep in mind most hotels do not allow pets over 25 lbs.

- Single pet parenting should be a consideration too. If you get a large lab in a small apartment and think it is okay because your spouse is there to walk him,

think again. Your spouse is sure to deploy sometime in the dogs lifetime and you need to be ready to walk the dog.

- Visiting the in-laws or going on vacation needs to be thought out when owning a pet. Cats do very well by themselves but should be checked on once a day. Having a neighbor stop in and freshen the food and water will probably suffice until you get back. Dogs on the other hand, depending on size, will have different requirements. If your pet is too large to fly you will want them to stay with a friend or in a kennel where they will get more attention. If you choose a kennel, be sure to ask about their daily

pet routine to ensure your pet is healthy and happy while you are gone.

**Cost** - Be sure to factor in dog or cat food and treats in your grocery costs. Spaying or neutering cats and dogs should also be pre-planned. If you get your pet from the local pound you may get a coupon towards the costs of spaying or neutering.

Owning a pet can be very rewarding. By thinking of all the issues that may arise due to size, breed and choice of pet you are not only being a responsible pet owner but ensuring both you and your companion will have a long and happy life together.

## Tips provided for PCSing with your military pet

### FORT BLISS VETERINARY SERVICES

A permanent change of station is a stressful time for every military family, and those with pets are no exception. Moving a pet to a different country requires preparation and knowledge about the specific requirements of each country. Many countries require procedures which must be completed months in advance to the actual PCS date. To ease your transition through this time, research the requirements and prepare your pets with time. Do not procrastinate or you may be traveling alone.

**Germany:** Microchip, current vaccines, health certificate by government veterinarian.

**Hawaii:** Rabies titer blood work 180 days prior to travel, microchip, current vaccines.

**Japan:** Rabies titer blood work 180 days prior to travel, microchip, current vaccines.

**United Kingdom:** Microchip prior to all other procedures, rabies titer blood work 180 days prior to travel, two rabies vaccines after the microchip.

**CONUS:** Health certificate for flying, microchip, current vaccines.

Health certificates are good for 30 days if you are driving and 10 days if you are flying. Many airlines also have particular requirements so check with the airlines prior to travel. Many airlines do not allow animals to travel cargo during the summer months.

For updates and detailed information on importation requirements, visit the USDA website at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) and then follow the links to travel and recreation, then to pet travel, then to

country requirements. You can also go directly to [www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ncie/iregs/animals/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ncie/iregs/animals/).

The Fort Bliss Veterinary Services is open for walk-in (vaccinations, microchipping, deworming only) or sick call appointments (must call ahead to make an appointment, no sick calls taken as walk-in) Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9 to 11:30 a.m. and 1 to 3:30 p.m. Health certificates and rabies titer blood work must be done by appointment only. For safety reasons, no children under the age of 12 are allowed inside the clinic. A veterinary clinic contains many hazards that could cause injury to a child. We look forward to seeing you and your pet for all your veterinary needs.

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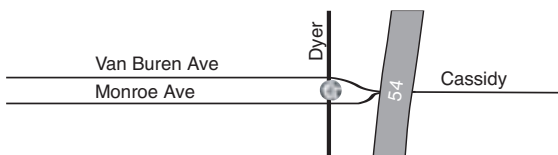
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