CONGRATULATIONS to PSI’s 2020 Pet Sitter of the Year

Winter Woes
The dangers of antifreeze & de-icing salts

Employees vs. ICs
Understanding the changing laws

Instagram Ingenuity
Putting the platform to work for your business

Household Hazards
Keeping indoor pets safe

Leash Reactivity
Common training mistakes to avoid
Reach New Heights in 2020!

Last year, PSI celebrated its 25th Anniversary. This year, we are focusing on what’s in store for the future of the professional pet-sitting industry.

March 4, 2020
PET SITTER WORLD™
ONLINE
PSI’s Online Conference for Pet Sitters & Dog Walkers

PSI’s Annual Educational Conference
October 2-4 • St. Louis, MO

Pick one. Pick both. You decide.
More details coming soon.

Registration opens January 2020.
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On the cover
Meet Jeanne Crockett, PSI’s 2020 Pet Sitter of the Year™ and owner of Crockett’s Critter Care, New Bern, N.C. The photo was taken by Bob Mackowski from Open Aperture Photography.
Attention CPPSs!

Take the Pet Sitter’s World Quiz to earn renewal CEUs.

If you are a CPPS, you can now earn one (1) CEU for answering all five of these questions correctly. The answers can all be found in the pages of this issue of Pet Sitter’s World.

1. According to PSI’s 2018 State of the Industry Survey, which two social-media platforms are the top two currently being used by professional pet sitters to promote their businesses?

2. True or False: Adding a bittering agent to antifreeze (whose sweet taste typically attracts pets) finally became a federal requirement in 2005.

3. Name two organizations (mentioned in this issue) that list qualified pet behavior consultants on their websites.

4. According to the CDC, who is at the greatest risk for contracting zoonotic diseases?

5. Fill in the blank: National Bird Day is celebrated on __________.

Email your answers to education@petsit.com and be sure to include the Subject Line: Jan/Feb World Quiz.

You can get a maximum of 10 CEUs per three-year renewal cycle with these quizzes. Look for a new one in each issue of Pet Sitter’s World!

Outside Contributors in This Issue

Debbie De Louise is a reference librarian at a public library. She is a member of the Cat Writers’ Association, The Long Island Author’s Group, Sisters-in-Crime, and International Thriller Writers and the author of seven novels including the four books of her Cobble Cove cozy mystery series. Learn more at https://debbiedelouise.com.

Denise Fleck was named a “Woman of Influence” and one of “Atlanta’s Most Inspiring Stories” by Voyage Atlanta Magazine. She has won awards for her books (13 currently available on Amazon), articles and Pet Safety Crusader Radio Show and has personally taught more than 15K humans Pet First-Aid & CPR. Check out her The Pet Safety Bible for more first aid tips and visit www.PetSafetyCrusader.com.

Katenna Jones, ScM, ACAAB, CCBC, CDBC, CPDT-KA, is owner and operator of Jones Animal Behavior, through which she provides dog and cat behavior consultation and training services for pet owners and local rescues. She regularly provides professional development for companion animal professionals and is a co-chair of the IAABC Shelter Behavior Division. Learn more at www.JonesAnimalBehavior.com.

Dr. Marci Koski is an award-winning certified feline behavior and training consultant. Through her business, Feline Behavior Solutions, Marci consults with people all over the United States and Canada to resolve cat behavior issues and meet her mission of keeping cats in homes and out of shelters. She also volunteers with local animal rescue organizations and is an experienced speaker who educates the public about how to better understand—and meet—their cats’ needs. Learn more at www.FelineBehaviorSolutions.com.

Jeffrey G. McClure graduated from the State University of New York at Oneonta with a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science in 1988 and earned his Juris Doctor degree from California Western School of Law in 1991. He has represented employers before state and federal courts as well as various state and federal administrative agencies. Learn more at laborcounsel.com.

David Pearsall is the vice president of Business Insurers of the Carolinas (BIC) in Chapel Hill, N.C., which provides the Pet Sitters Liability Protection Policy and other insurance products to PSI members in the U.S. Visit www.psi-ins.com to learn more or contact BIC by phone at 1-800-962-4611.
A Message from Patti Moran…

PSI’s 25th Anniversary “Birthday Bash,” which took place at the conclusion of our 2019 Pet Sitter World Educational Conference, was very special to me. I was—and remain—so touched at the sentiments expressed by so many of you. Thank you, again, to those of you who sent in a congratulatory video or personally expressed your gratitude for the PSI organization at the conference. The “25 Year Tribute” was truly a surprise that honored and humbled me.

As I tried to convey after the tribute, it has taken a village to build this organization into what it is today. Superb employees (past and present), invested industry partners, and dedicated members who believe that education is paramount to excellence and professionalism in pet sitting have all been important to the integrity and success of PSI.

I am proud and thankful for all that we have accomplished—together—in our first 25 years. With your continued support, I’m sure that many more good things are ahead as PSI begins its second quarter-of-a-century supporting, promoting and recognizing excellence in professional pet sitting!

4 THINGS COMING UP AT PSI

1. Registration for both PSI’s Pet Sitter World ONLINE Conference (March) and PSI’s Annual Pet Sitter World Educational Conference (October) will open on Jan. 1. Reserve your spot early to take advantage of special early bird pricing. Learn more at petsit.com/conference.

2. PSI has announced the 2020 Pet Sitter of the Year. Please join us in congratulating Jeanne Crockett of Crockett’s Critter Care in New Bern, N.C. Be sure to read the announcement in this issue to learn more about Jeanne, her business and how she’d like to help fellow members.

3. Are you taking advantage of the new monthly Live Q&A sessions in PSI’s private Facebook group? The next two will take place on Jan. 30 and Feb. 27. Visit Professional Pet Sitters Chat on Facebook to learn more, and remember, questions can be sent in advance to info@petsit.com.

4. Don’t miss PSI’s first free member webinar of the year, “Protect Your Pet-Sitting Business with Policies and Procedures,” on Wednesday, Feb. 19, at 3 p.m. ET. The webinar is free, but pre-registration is required. Visit petsit.com/psi-webinars to register.
The New Year is traditionally a time of new beginnings and fresh starts. That’s one of the many reasons I’m more than pleased to announce that as PSI begins its 26th year of business (our next quarter of a century!) it does so under the leadership of Beth Stultz-Hairston as the organization’s new president. I hope you will join me in congratulating Beth on her new position which she assumes on January 1, 2020.

Beth began her career with PSI in 2004, shortly after graduating from college. She started in our Member Services department where she quickly fell in love with our members and the industry of professional pet sitting. Within a few years she was supervising Member Services and from there, it’s been a natural progression (and a lot of hard work) to the presidency.

Those of you who know Beth and who have worked with her in the past already know what an amazing person she is. Her strategic thinking, organizational skills, and innovative ideas and solutions are just a few of the qualities that make her perfectly suited to serve as the second president of PSI.

I often say that Beth “took to pet sitting like a duck takes to water.” I have been fortunate to have her under my wing for the past 15 years and to have watched her grow into this new role. I have every confidence in her abilities to take PSI forward and hope you, too, will share in my support—and excitement—of Beth’s new role.

Go, Beth, go!

— Patti J. Moran, Founder & CEO
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PSI congratulates the 2020 Pet Sitter of the Year™:

Jeanne Crockett, CPPS®, Crockett’s Critter Care
Now with six employees and around 115 client households, Crockett’s Critter Care has grown significantly since Jeanne Crockett first opened the business in 2012. Jeanne’s growth in the business, however, started long before she ever took on her first client.

In 2009, she joined Pet Sitters International to learn more about the industry and participated in many PSI webinars before ever starting her business. Then, she obtained her Certificate of NC Real Entrepreneurship Training, a course sponsored by her local Small Business Center, which consisted of 10 three-hour workshops over a five-week period led by experts in law, finance, marketing and more.

In 2012, Jeanne was also accepted into the Grow America Through Entrepreneurship Gate (GATE) Program sponsored by the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center. She says this generous grant enabled her to take a QuickBooks course and purchase Quick-Books software, pay for the Certified Professional Pet Sitter (CPPS®) program, train in pet first aid/CPR, register for her first PSI conference, attend a local Dog Learning Conference offered by Lynn Swanson, DVM, and launch Crockett’s Critter Care.

This commitment to education and professional development has propelled her far in her career so far, and her most recent accomplishment—being named PSI’s new Pet Sitter of the Year—is a testament to Jeanne’s hard work and commitment.

As PSI’s 2020 Pet Sitter of the Year, Jeanne will serve as the “face of the professional pet-sitting industry” throughout 2020 and will be officially crowned at PSI’s 2020 Pet Sitter World Educational Conference in October.

“PSI’s membership represents the best of the best in our industry and selecting a recipient for this honor is never an easy task for the judges,” said PSI President Patti J. Moran. “Jeanne is the epitome of a professional pet sitter. She has already had such a great impact on our industry, and we are excited to see her inspire even more pet sitters as Pet Sitter of the Year.”

Jeanne was careful to lay a strong foundation for her pet-sitting business and she has continued with this same diligence as she grows her business. In 2016, she hired an HR consultant to prepare an employee handbook and help her establish a process to onboard employees in order to expand her services. After that, she hired her first employee in June 2016 and currently maintains a base of six employees. Since then she’s also become the first Certified Fear Free Professional in New Bern and achieved Level 2 & Level 3 status in the Fear Free Program. She also completed the Infectious Disease Management Program in 2018 and continues to take advantage of a variety of learning opportunities to further her education.

Despite a busy pet-sitting schedule, Crockett is committed to her local pet community. Since 2002 she has been active in the local rescue community. After Hurricane Florence, Crockett volunteered to walk the dogs stranded at the shelter as they waited to be reunited with their pet parents. Now she continues to support the local rescue groups by posting adoptable pets on her Facebook page, encouraging people to adopt a shelter pet, and promoting the need to donate locally to support the shelters.

She also believes in taking a stand both locally and nationally to create a better world for our pets by advocating to change animal laws. She began a decade-long campaign to end the use of the gas chamber at her local shelter. She has also campaigned for more animal control officers in her county to turn the tide on animal cruelty. In fact, she organized a class for those who were interested in becoming Animal Control officers and awarded over 25 certificates to interested candidates. The course was made available for CU credits for vet techs, shelter staff, police officers, and animal rescue volunteers. Jeanne says she continues to voice her concern about tethering and other important animal issues and calls for action when an issue is pressing.

Jeanne plans to bring this same passion to her new role as PSI’s 2020 Pet Sitter of the Year. She says that as the only professional pet sitter in her area (amongst a sea of hobby sitters), she has championed the professional pet-sitting industry and has worked to continually gain more knowledge and credentials to set herself and her company far above the rest. As she describes it—“My systems are in place, my operations have been fine-tuned with an updated website, a strong team of employees with an excellent training program, and a plan for scaling up,”—and she wants to share this knowledge with fellow PSI members. She knows that she will be in a position to help those who are just starting out or looking to expand their business and is happy to help.

“From the beginning, PSI helped me mold my business,” Jeanne said. “This award would allow me to give back to my colleagues. The what, where, how, and when of my decisions stem from what I have learned by being a member of Pet Sitters International.”

Congratulations, Jeanne! We look forward to all you will accomplish as this year’s Pet Sitter of the Year.
Things to post about on social media: January and February 2020

Below is a list of pet-related observances (and a few other interesting celebrations) you can highlight on your company’s social-media pages in January and February.

**JANUARY**

- National Train Your Dog Month
- National Walk Your Dog Month
- Adopt a Rescued Bird Month
- National Mentoring Month
- January 1st: New Year’s Day
- January 2nd: National Pet Travel Safety Day; Happy Mew Year for Cats Day
- January 5th: National Bird Day
- January 14th: National Dress Up Your Pet Day
- January 21st: Squirrel Appreciation Day
- January 22nd: National Answer Your Cat’s Questions Day
- January 24th: Change a Pet’s Life Day; National Peanut Butter Day
- January 28th: National Have Fun At Work Day; National Plan for Vacation Day

**FEBRUARY**

- National Pet Dental Health Month
- Responsible Pet Owners Month
- Dog Training Education Month
- National Cat Health Month
- International Hoof Care Month
- Spay/Neuter Awareness Month
- Adopt a Rescued Rabbit Month
- February 2nd: National Hedgehog Day; Groundhog Day
- February 3rd: National Golden Retriever Day
- February 10th: National Clean Out Your Computer Day
- February 14th: Pet Theft Awareness Day; Valentine’s Day
- February 20th: Love Your Pet Day
- February 22nd: Walking the Dog Day
- February 23rd: National Dog Biscuit Day
- February 23rd-29th: National Justice for Animals Week
- February 25th: World Spay Day

Be sure to visit Professional Pet Sitters Chat, PSI’s private Facebook group for members, to download free social-media images for some of these observances.
Know Who You’re Hiring!

Special PSI member offer:
Add the Super Federal Search to your staff background check for ONLY $9.00.

You must call 888-361-7036 and mention this ad to get the special deal.
How to Address Potential Behavior or Environmental Issues with Clients
By Marci L. Koski, PhD, Feline Behavior Solutions

We’ve all been there. You visit a pet while their humans are away and it’s apparent that there is something wrong. Maybe the litterbox isn’t being used consistently and kitty has soiled a piece of furniture, or items in the house are being destroyed, or the pet is bored out of his mind. It’s hard when you know that something is wrong in the pet’s world—most of us are in this business because we love animals, and we want to make sure that they are just as happy with us as when their humans are home.

Sometimes we might have a good recommendation to resolve an apparent behavior-related problem, but other times we just see the result and either don’t know what the cause of the problem is or don’t know how to fix it. It’s completely fine if we don’t know how to fix a problem (there are others who are trained to do that job), but the important thing is to make sure that the pet guardian is aware that there is a problem. And that can put you in an uncomfortable position, since some guardians can get defensive about the way they care for their pets. You don’t want to risk insulting your client and losing their business, but you also want to ensure that their pets get the care they need.

Here are a few tools that can be helpful when you need to address something with a client.

1. Always address potential medical concerns. Many behavior issues have a medical cause. House-soiling, aggression, obsessive behaviors such as over-grooming, and excessive vocalizations are a few examples of behaviors where a medical issue might need to be addressed. Some of those medical conditions (such as urinary obstructions in cats) can be life-threatening within a very short time period. So, if you see a problematic behavior in a pet (or a change in behavior in pets you have seen before), please say something! Telling a client that there may be a medical issue (e.g., “I noticed that Frank is meowing a lot more recently. My vet told me that this could be a sign of pain in cats. Have you talked with your vet about this change in his behavior?”) will likely be appreciated by a client. I worry less about clients being defensive about medical issues, since that is something that doesn’t necessarily have “blame” associated with it. So, don’t be afraid to bring up anything that might have a medical cause; the bonus is that even if the animal checks out fine medically, they’ve now gone to see a vet about it, and the vet is
someone who might be able to give some behavior advice, or recommend a behavior professional who can help.

2. Know your clients. Many pet sitters only meet our human clients once, at the meet and greet. During that time, we need to assess how willing our clients are to hearing about issues with their pets. Do your clients ask you questions about what you think would be best for their pets while they are away? If so, they are essentially asking for your expertise. These are the people who are generally open to suggestions. If your clients are more about following a strict regimen with no input from you, your clients may be less open to suggestions and you might have to think about phrasing and how to present information in a way that will be more acceptable to them. That’s OK though—there are plenty of ways to do that while being tactful, respectful, and still get your point across.

3. Pick your battles. Depending on the type of client you have, you’ll need to decide which behaviors necessitate mention or which suggestions to provide. Again, any issue you notice that may have a medical cause should be communicated to your client (and it is up to the vet to provide recommendations about how to resolve it, not you). Other things, however, may need to be evaluated based on how open your clients are to making changes. Sometimes it’s best to address only the most pressing issue and let the little things slide.

Here’s an example. In many of my clients’ homes, food and water are placed very near litterboxes. I know that cats do not want to eat and drink near their litterboxes—they evolved to do those activities far away from each other (besides, ew). In some homes, that might be the only problem I see (in which case, I might say something depending on how open the client is). In other homes, that might be by far the least of the cat’s worries! There could be other things—the dog is eating all of the cat’s food, the cat has no toys and is bored all day, the cat is completely shredding the sofa, etc. Out of those issues, I’ll take the most pressing one and address the issue with the client. Sometimes the client just doesn’t know that the cat doesn’t want to eat by her litterbox; other times, the client has other priorities.

4. Lead by example. Sometimes it’s best to be able to show your client what works. I’m NOT advising you go into a client’s home and do things based on what you think should be done instead of what you’ve been instructed to do! But, depending on the circumstances, you can try new things and report what works. For example, if your client’s cat doesn’t have any toys, bring a couple over for her to play with and leave them there.

Or, if there’s room, try moving the food and water dish back from the litterbox by a few feet.

5. Make suggestions when appropriate. Keeping in mind that you are likely not a veterinarian or a behavior expert, you may have suggestions that can improve the behavior or quality of life of your client’s pet. If you feel the need to be more delicate when it comes to making these suggestions, try these tactics:

- Sometimes it helps to frame a suggestion from the point of view of their pet. Let them know how the pet might feel. Leave a note for them to read upon their return: “I noticed that some litter was getting in your cat’s food and water bowls, so I moved them further from the litterbox. I hope you don’t mind—it seemed like your kitty preferred eating further from the litterbox.”

- If you send daily text messages/updates, you can send them video/photos to show results. This is a great way to lead by example: “I know you said that your cat doesn’t play, but I brought over a wand toy and just look at her go! I’ve left this toy for you so that you can play with her too.”

- Having advice that comes (indirectly) from another source can sometimes be swallowed more easily: “I have a client whose dog did the same thing as yours, and she solved the problem by doing this…” Of course, many things are not one-size-fits-all solutions, so be careful about what you are recommending and avoid giving advice outside of your area of expertise.

6. Be prepared with resources. Recognize when it’s time to call in a professional. Just like veterinarians address medical issues, there are behavior professionals who work with dogs, cats, and other animals. For issues outside of your realm of expertise (e.g., chronic house-soiling, aggression, fearfulness, etc.) having a list of local behavior professionals you can recommend may be appreciated by your clients (especially if your client mentions the issue up front). There are several organizations that have qualified behavior consultants on their websites; the two I most frequently recommend are the Pet Professional Guild (www.petprofessionalguild.com) and the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (https://m.iaabc.org/).

Most people will welcome suggestions that make the lives of their pets better, because having happy pets makes for happy guardians. And it also feels great coming back to a home and seeing your recommendation being implemented, knowing that you made a difference in someone’s life!
Changes to the PSI Employee Dishonesty Bond: What you need to know
It is with mixed feelings I must inform you that effective 12/1/2019, Business Insurers of the Carolinas will no longer be offering PSI Employee Dishonesty Bonds through Travelers Insurance Company/Travelers Bond.

We have worked with Travelers Bond Department for over 17 years, and they have offered consistently good service and pricing on the PSI Bond Program. However, due to a required filing change in all states, Travelers was looking at a 40 percent increase in premium to a large majority of PSI members who currently carry a Bond, which was unacceptable.

Therefore, we agreed to part ways, and fortunately we were able to find two companies to replace Travelers in offering PSI members quality bonding coverage.

Bond now available under the PSI Liability Insurance Policy
First and foremost, we were able to work with Century Surety Insurance Company to now offer the Bonds as an option under the PSI Liability Insurance Policy. So, if you purchase Liability Insurance via the PSI Liability Insurance plan, you can now add Bonding coverage on to your certificate/policy.

Going forward, you will not have to complete two renewal applications, as coverage will be on the same certificate/policy. And the best news of all is Century Surety has duplicated the coverage, limits, and pricing of the former Travelers Bond!

This means the PSI Bond will continue to be the broadest bond coverage form on the market at the best price. It will cover all owners, employees and independent contractors, and it will also remove the required conviction clause. In lieu of a conviction clause, it only requires a burden of proof such as an IC being caught on a nanny cam, or an employee confessing to a theft of your client’s property.

Purchasing a bond if you do not use the PSI Liability Insurance Policy
For those of you who currently have the Travelers Bond, but do not have your liability insurance via the PSI Liability policy, we will be offering a bond renewal via CNA Surety Company.

Unfortunately, coverage via CNA’s Bond is not quite as broad as the Travelers policy. The CNA bond will cover owners and employees, but it will not cover independent contractors.

In addition, it will also require a conviction clause before it will reimburse. Premiums begin at $100 for $10,000 in coverage and higher limits up to $100,000 are available.

Please note your current bond coverage with Travelers will remain in effect until your next renewal (up to 11/1/2020). If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact our office at 1-800-962-4611.

New Products Offered at BIC:
Most of you are aware of the many optional endorsements available under the PSI Liability policy, including In-Home Boarding/Daycare, Dog Training, Pet Grooming and House Sitting; but did you know we now offer separate policies specifically for other types of pet-related services such as Therapy Dog Handlers and Pet Food/Treats Distributors and Manufacturers? Both of these products are unique in scope, so I would like to share what each covers and what is required in underwriting to obtain a policy at reduced rates.

Therapy Dog Handler Coverage
Let’s begin with the Therapy Dog Handler Coverage. Perhaps you already have a therapy dog that you take to a children’s hospital or your local school system, or you may know someone that has a psychology practice that uses their therapy dog while working with patients. Often these facilities or building owners require you to carry liability insurance to bring your therapy dog into their facilities.

Now, we are proud to offer coverage for all of the above via our Pet Care Affiliates new Therapy Dog Handler Insurance plan. The plan includes $1,000,000 per occurrence liability coverage, as well as $10,000 in vet medical coverage for your therapy dog, if injured while working in a therapeutic setting. Annual premiums start at $200 for 1 dog/1 handler and increase based on number of dogs and number of additional insureds needed.

However, our insurer does have some underwriting rules that are required in order to take out a policy. First, the policy does not cover service dogs, only therapy dogs. Second, in order to
be accepted, you and your dog must be certified by a national certification program such as the Alliance of Therapy Dogs or Pet Partners. Yes, both of these organizations do offer insurance coverage while participating in their own events. However, their insurance does not cover if you wish to do events that are not sponsored by them, and it also does not cover if you use a therapy dog in your personal practice (social work, psychology, etc.). The underwriters will not accept small local certification programs, but they will accept a few other certification programs that have had their certification vetted by the underwriters and received approval. One of the underwriting requirements includes sending in your certification and renewal certification every 24 months.

**Pet Food/Treat Distributors and Manufacturers**
The second coverage we now are offering via Pet Care Affiliates is a stand-alone policy for Pet Food/Treat Distributors and Manufacturers. This policy is designed to cover clients whose primary operation is distributing or manufacturing pet food/treats/snacks, including if you make and sell pet treats for your clients. It offers $1,000,000 per occurrence/$2,000,000 Aggregate limits for product liability coverage, should a pet or person be injured from your pet food product. The minimum premium starts at $250 annually and increases based on your gross sales.

If you have questions regarding these new offerings or any of the coverages offered to PSI Members, please contact us at 1-800-962-4611 or via email at PSI@Business-Insurers.com

### Recent General Liability Claims:
- While on a walk a dog in the pet sitter’s care got into a fight with another person’s dog causing injuries. **Total Paid $1,073.**
- During a walk the dog in a pet sitter’s care bit a person that attempted to pass them. **Total Paid $4,500.**
- A pet sitter lost the keys to a client’s home and the home was rekeyed. **Total Paid $169.**
- One of the dogs in the pet sitter’s care was prescribed Rimadyl. Approximately 15 Rimadyl tablets were ingested by one or more dogs. The dogs were taken to the vet. **Total Paid $2,049.**
- A pet sitter damaged a client’s screen door and wall while staying at their home to take care of their animals. **Total Paid $881.**
- A pet sitter gave a cat an insulin injection which made the cat very sick. The cat was taken to the vet. **Total Paid $4,581.**
- A dog was placed in the crate when the sitter left. However, the crate was too close to the wall. The dog chewed a hole in the wall. **Total Paid $1,150.**
- A client returned home to discover her cat had a broken back leg that occurred while in the pet sitter’s care. **Total Paid $2,345.**
- A pet sitter was walking a client’s dog near an apartment building. A person was exiting the building when the dog in the pet sitter’s care bit the person on the leg. **Total Paid $15,000.**
- A pet sitter was brushing cat with a Furminator and the cat developed an open sore and needed medical attention. **Total Paid $214.**

### Recent Workers Compensation Claims:
- An employee twisted her left ankle while walking dogs. **Total Paid Medical & Indemnity $37,260.**
- An employee was bit on the left buttocks by a dog and suffered a slight puncture. **Total Paid $243.**
- An employee was entering a home from walking dogs and hit her right pinky on the door jamb, breaking her pinky finger. **Total Paid $905.**
- While on a dog walk, an employee was tripped by the dog causing an injury to the knee. **Total Paid Medical & Indemnity $4,049.**
Zoonoses (or zoonotic diseases) are infectious diseases that can be spread between animals and people. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), zoonotic diseases are common in the United States and around the world, and scientists estimate that more than 6 out of every 10 infectious diseases in people are spread from animals and 75 percent of new or emerging diseases are also spread from animals.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), some common zoonotic diseases you are likely to encounter are Salmonella, Ringworm, Roundworms, Hookworms, Cat Scratch Disease and Rabies.

People can become infected with germs that cause zoonotic diseases from direct contact (with an animal’s saliva, blood, urine, feces, etc.), indirect contact (through aquarium tank water, chicken coops, pet food dishes, etc.), vector-borne (such as being bitten by a tick, mosquito or flea) or foodborne (by eating contaminated foods, undercooked meats, etc.).

The CDC reports that children younger than five years old, adults older than 65 years old and those with weakened immune systems are at the greatest risk, but it’s important for everyone to understand the risks and take safety precautions.

One simple—but important—precaution is to always wash your hands after being around animals (even if you don’t touch the animals). If you can’t wash your hands with soap and water right away, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (but still wash your hands with soap and water as soon as you can).

It’s also important that your pets (and the pets in your care) have regular veterinary visits, and are up to date on vaccines, deworming, and flea and tick control. Dog feces should be removed from the yard and always carry bags to pick up poop on your dog’s walk. Cat litter boxes should also be cleaned daily to lower the chances of exposure to parasites.

Also exercise caution when cleaning pet supplies. The CDC advises that you never clean your pet supplies (or client’s pet supplies) in the bathroom sink, kitchen sink or food preparation areas to avoid contaminating surfaces in the home.
California business owners that utilize independent contractors have likely heard of a new law that is designed to discourage businesses from using independent contractors and instead convert those workers to employees. Referred to as AB5 (or Assembly Bill No. 5), the law was written in response to the perceived slights for “gig economy” workers like Uber and Lyft drivers.

Unfortunately, AB5’s broad attack on independent contractor relationships will affect businesses of all sizes. As a result, those in the pet-sitting industry who desire the flexibility of an independent contractor relationship face new challenges if they wish to continue to operate in that manner. For those in other states, there is a push for similar laws. Thus, the landscape for businesses using independent contractors is undergoing fundamental changes. However, all may not be lost.

AB5 has exemptions that may be applicable to pet-sitting businesses. Applying these requires due diligence to ensure that those classified as independent contractors are truly conducting themselves as an independent business.

The New Law

A 2018 California Supreme Court decision in the case of Dynamex Operations West, Inc. v Superior Court of Los Angeles changed how state courts reviewed independent contractor relationships, at least with respect to certain wage-related claims. For nearly 30 years, independent contractor relationships were governed by the Court’s 1989 decision in S.G. Borello & Sons, Inc. v. Department of Industrial Relations.

Under Borello test, courts focused on whether the hiring company retained the right to exercise direction and control over a contractor. If it did so, then the contractor would be deemed an employee. But if the contractor determined the methods and means for performing the services, then the hiring company could prove an independent contractor relationship existed.

In Dynamex, the Court cast aside Borello and instead held that businesses using independent contractors would be evaluated by the “ABC” test.

The ABC test requires that the hiring company prove all of the following:

A. The worker is free from the hiring company’s direction and control while performing the work.
B. The work falls outside the scope of the hiring company’s usual business.
C. The worker is customarily engaged in an independently established trade, business or occupation of the same nature as the work performed for the hiring entity.

For many pet-sitting businesses, Steps A and C could be routinely met. However, Step B posed a massive problem. Pet-sitting companies are obviously in the pet-sitting business, and thus the work of independent contractor pet sitters did not fall outside the scope of the hiring company’s normal business.

For good reason the business community was alarmed at Dynamex and its potential impact, as it toppled years of precedent established by Borello. After Dynamex, there were suggestions that the state legislature was going to restore Borello, or at least provide some relief from Dynamex. However, the opposite happened as the legislature passed AB5, codifying Dynamex.

As AB5 worked its way through the legislature, many interested groups lobbied for exemptions with varying degrees of success. Ultimately, AB5 was signed into
law, effective January 1, 2020, extending the holding of Dynamex by regulating independent contractor relationships arising under workers compensation and unemployment insurance, as well as Labor Code related wage and hour claims.

Possible Exemptions
For the pet-sitting industry there are two exemptions to AB5 worth reviewing, the “Referral Agency” and the “Business to Business” exemptions. If a hiring company can prove either one, the ABC Test will not be used to evaluate an independent contractor relationship. Instead, the long-standing Borello test will be used.

AB5 defines a “Referral Agency” as a business that connects clients with providers that provide certain services including animal services, dog walking, and dog grooming. For the exemption to apply, the referral agency must demonstrate that the contractor:

A. Is free from the control and direction of the referral agency in performing the work.
B. Has a required business license or business tax registration.
C. Has a required state contractor’s license, if necessary.
D. Is delivering services to the client under service provider’s name, rather than under the name of the referral agency.
E. Provides its own tools and supplies to perform the services.
F. Is customarily engaged in an independently established business
G. Maintains a clientele without any restrictions from the referral agency and is free to seek work elsewhere, including through a competing agency.
H. Sets its own hours and terms of work and is free to accept or reject clients and contracts.
I. Sets its own rates for services performed, without deduction by the referral agency.
J. Is not penalized in any form for rejecting clients or contracts.

The “Business to Business Exemption” has similar requirements. Under this exemption, the “contracting business” must demonstrate that the “service provider”:

A. Is free from control and direction.
B. Is providing services directly to the contracting business rather than to customers of the contracting business.
C. Has a written contract.
D. Has required business license or business tax registration.
E. Has a separate business location.
F. Is customarily engaged in an independently established business.
G. Actually contracts with other businesses to provide the same or similar services and maintains its own clientele without restrictions.
H. Advertises and holds itself out to the public.
I. Provides its own tools, vehicles, and equipment.
J. Can negotiate its own rates.
K. Can set own hours and location of work, consistent with business needs.
L. Is not performing work that requires a license from the California State Contractors Licensing Board.

Both exemptions have one other very important requirement. Neither exemption applies to “an individual worker, as opposed to a business entity, who performs labor or services for a contracting business.” This means that the hiring company must ensure that the contractor has established a sole proprietorship, corporation, LLC, or some other business entity or the exemption will not apply. In addition, payments for work performed should also be in the name of that business entity and not an individual. If these measures are not taken, the purported independent contractor will be treated as an employee.

Conclusion
AB5 portends a dramatic change in independent contractor relationships in California. There is talk of additional exemptions being added to the law as lobbyists in various industries are called to action. There is also a pledge by Uber, Lyft, and Door Dash to mount a $90M campaign to gut AB5 by going directly to the voters in the form of a Proposition. But businesses should not expect any relief to be forthcoming very soon.

Rather, they should look to their own day-to-day operations and determine if they can work under the existing exemptions. To do so will require a concerted effort to ensure that contractors are acting like truly independent businesses and not individual workers. Failing to do so will make it virtually impossible to meet any exemption.
**January 2020 Calendar for PSI Members**

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**Additional Dates:**
- **February 05:** PSI office closed.
- **February 12:** PSI office closed.
- **February 19:** PSI office closed.
- **February 26:** PSI office closed.

**Notes:**
- PSI members, please check for your weekly PSI member email!
- PSI’s office is closed on weekends.
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**FREE** PSI Member Webinar, 3 p.m. ET

Monthly PET SIT PRO webinar, 3 p.m. ET

Live Q&A in PSI’s private Facebook group
Most people know that outdoor pets face many dangers. They can be hit by a car, exposed to various diseases, unprotected from extreme weather, and harmed in other ways. But indoor pets also face hazards. These include serious reactions and sometimes death from ingesting toxic products, plants, food, and miscellaneous household items including medications.

**Hazards of Household Cleaners**

According to Amy Shojai, a nationally known pet care expert and the author of over 30 pet books including *The First Aid Companion for Dogs & Cats*, "Bleach, drain cleaner and toilet bowl products, phenol disinfectants like Lysol and Pine-sol (they often have ‘sol’ in the name), and petroleum products such as gasoline, kerosene, or turpentine are all highly toxic to pets." Although these items are dangerous to both cats and dogs, Shojai said that felines are more sensitive to phenol products.

Shojai recommends keeping these products out of "paw-reach." She stores cleaners under the sink but says that they could also be kept in a separate closet with a latched door. "When using these cleaners, ensure your pets are safely confined in another room. Don’t allow them access to the cleaned area until after the product has thoroughly dried. At my house, we make a habit of ALWAYS closing the lid to the commode so neither the cat nor dog ever has access to the toilet as a ‘drinking fountain.' While dogs explore more by sniffing and tasting even noxious products, cats may simply walk across a treated floor, lick their paws clean, and end up poisoned."

Debbie Nearenberg, DVM, relates an experience she had where a dog was brought to her that had eaten a Clorox wipe. Although it turned out that the wipe wasn’t toxic because it didn’t contain bleach, she had to induce vomiting to avoid the wipe causing an obstruction. Many other common products can cause obstructions such as string, thread, rubber bands, and dental...
floss. My brother’s cat, when it was young, ate dental floss and required surgery. He survived and lived a long life, although the surgery put my brother back quite a bit of money.

Ingestion or contact with toxic products causes different signs of illness. Neareenberg says that a pet may drool, appear weak or wobbly, vomit, or exhibit other abnormal behavior. Shojai warns that if a dangerous product is spilled on a pet, especially a phenol product that is absorbed through the skin and can lead to coma and death, the pet owner shouldn’t induce vomiting but should flush the contact area with water for 10 minutes. If bleach or another acid is ingested, she said you could give the pet two teaspoons of milk of magnesia. For alkaline poisons like drain cleaner, Shojai recommends six tablespoons of a 50/50 mix of water and lemon juice or vinegar to neutralize the poison. If the pet has ingested a Petroleum product, it will vomit, have difficulty breathing, and may shake and have seizures. If you can’t bring it to a vet or emergency pet clinic within 30 minutes, Shojai suggests giving the pet one to two ounces of mineral, olive, or vegetable oil by mouth. The most important thing if a pet has ingested or been exposed to a toxic household product is to bring him to a vet or emergency veterinary clinic as soon as possible.

Author and blogger Denise Lee Branco doesn’t keep plants in her house, although she enjoys their beauty. “I’ve chosen not to have flowers or plants in my house so my indoor-only cats are safe,” she said, “But I planted a rose garden and flowering shrubs so I can look out my windows and have the next best thing.” She also gives her cats wheatgrass to satisfy their need to nibble greenery. She keeps it in her refrigerator and clips a little at a time for them, so they won’t eat too much and vomit.

Cat author Mollie Hunt also faced problems with plants and her cat Tyler. When she inherited some plants from her mother, she said that she “tried many things to keep them—and Tyler—safe, including draping them with gauze and spraying them with lemon juice, but it never really worked. The only sure way was to set the plants out of cat-reach, so that’s what I did. But one that he shouldn’t have been able to get to, an Aloe Vera, became his favorite when he figured out how to climb up to it. I ended up giving that one away to a home without cats.”

Hunt then noticed that Tyler seemed to like plant stems more than their leaves. She purchased honeysuckle sticks for him and also planted a pot of cat grass and catnip mix called “Pet Grazing Garden.” That seemed to do the trick, or maybe Tyler just became bored with going after plants because he stopped except for a Hoya that Hunt says he only seems to attack when someone’s watching to get their attention.

Pets and Plant Dangers

Pet owners may also keep plants in their homes that are poisonous to animals. Cats like to chew on plant leaves. During December, people decorate with Poinsettias, while Easter lilies are popular in the spring. Both are toxic to pets. I have a lemon plant that’s a patio plant, but I keep it indoors when it’s cold outside. Last winter, when my cat Hermione was still a kitten, she got into the room with the lemon plant. I caught her before she chewed on the plant but wasn’t sure if she’d nibbled a leaf that had fallen on the ground. I contacted my vet who told me that a dry leaf isn’t as dangerous as a fresh one. She advised me to observe Hermione for any signs of poisoning such as vomiting which she thankfully didn’t show.

Food Dangers

Another danger to indoor pets is food that, while eaten by people, can be toxic to animals. Most people know that chocolate is dangerous to pets. However, they may not
be aware that other foods can cause digestive upset or even death such as raisins and grapes which Nearenberg states can cause kidney failure in both cats and dogs. Xylitol, a chemical in sugar-free gum, is also a no-no for pets.

Jeanne Kudich, blogger of Randomfelines.com, had a close call with M & M’s and her cats Tim and Tom. “When I first adopted Tim and Tom, Tim got on the counter, opened a bag of M & M’s and knocked them to the floor for his brother to eat (he only got three or four).” Luckily, Tom was okay.

**Other Household Hazards**

Common household items also pose dangers to pets including medications, office supplies, holiday and other decorations, and miscellaneous products. Kudich recalls a scary yet funny incident. “I caught Tom crunching something. Turns out it was a birth control pill. He was fine, and the vet got a good laugh.” Nearenberg pointed out that aspirin and Tylenol are deadly to cats while not as toxic to dogs but shouldn’t be administered to either animal.

When I first got married and lived in an apartment, I had a cat named Floppy. We’d put up a small tree for Christmas, and he kept knocking it down. One day, I caught him with something in his mouth. It turned out to be an ornament hook. Luckily, I got it out of his mouth before he swallowed it. After that, I only used ribbon to hang ornaments, but I made sure he didn’t get those either. More recently, I found some staples on my kitchen floor near where I feed my three cats. They weren’t easy to see, but I picked them all up. I then found the source—my kitchen drawer where I’d been keeping a box of staples. I’ve since moved them inside a closed drawer in my office. I’m still on the lookout for dangerous items. Whenever I break a glass in the kitchen, I vacuum up the small shards and also go over the area with a wet cloth for fear the cats will pick up the small pieces in their paws or I or one of my other family members will get them in our feet. Small batteries, such as the button-cell type, are toxic if swallowed by a curious pet. Because of their size and shape, cats find them appealing to play with.

Another incident that occurred recently was when I accidently sprayed our cat Harry with a mixture of essential oils and water. I needed to get him off the top of my closet, so I grabbed a spray bottle I thought was full of water. I later found out that my teenage daughter had filled it with an essential oil mixture. Some essential oils absorbed through the skin are lethal to pets. I wiped Harry off with a wet cloth as soon as he came down from the closet and thanked goodness that he seemed fine afterwards.

Besides dangerous objects, pet owners need to make sure they close or turn off appliances after they’ve used them for their own safety and their pets. Cats are inquisitive by nature and like to go inside things especially warm places. There have been terrible accidents when cats have gotten into an open washing machine or dryer. You also must be careful when opening and closing drawers and doors. When I was putting away clothes, my cat Harry almost got his paw stuck in the drawer when I went to close it. I’ve also almost closed a door on some of my cats’ tails not to mention stepping on their feet, luckily lightly and with slippers.

Like babies and young children, you can never be too safe with pets in the house. Nearenberg recommends locking things away in cabinets and keeping things off counters. My cat Harry, as a kitten, went through a period of jumping on my kitchen counter and even sitting in my sink. My cat Floppy used to jump on my stove, so I had to put child-proof locks around the knobs.

An interesting side note that Nearenberg mentioned was that people have brought pets to her who’d consumed alcohol and pot. She mentioned that there was a 60 percent increase in dogs intoxicated from marijuana in Colorado when it became legal.

Below are links to articles about toxic plants, foods, and products:

- www.proflowers.com/blog/poisonous-plants
- www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/people-foods-avoid-feeding-your-pets/
- www.americanhumane.org/blog/the-4-surprising-pet-poisons-lurking-in-your-home
- www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/poisonous-household-products

Remember, if you’re not sure what is safe for your pet, use caution and check with your vet.
Make pet sitting easier with music that’s clinically proven to calm dogs, cats and small animals.

Subscribe to monthly music downloads to play on any device, wherever you pet sit.

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The Dangers of Antifreeze & De-icing Salts

By Denise Fleck, The Pet Safety Crusader™

Antifreeze is a colored liquid that when mixed with water, helps maintain an even temperature in your car’s engine. It prevents corrosion and lowers the freezing point of liquid, so obviously not something good to ingest! In late 2013, the Humane Society Legislative Fund and the Consumer Specialty Products Association announced a voluntary measure in which manufacturers of antifreeze, in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, voluntarily agreed to add a bittering agent (denatonium benzoate, also used to prevent nail-biting in humans) to the normally sweet-tasting product, in hopes of making it less enticing to pets. Numerous attempts have been made to make the addition of a bitter flavor a federal requirement. In 1995, Oregon passed a law and 16 other states followed but still, for now, this voluntary agreement is the closest protection our pets have nationwide.

What Makes Antifreeze Taste Good?

Ethylene glycol (EG), typically makes up 95% of the ingredients in antifreeze and is what imparts the sweet flavor. Besides being in engine coolant, EG can be found in motor oil, de-icing products, hydraulic brake fluid, developing solutions for photography, paints, solvents, and even snow globes! Dogs love the sweet taste and will lap up a puddle off the garage floor.

Cats are more likely to ingest by grooming themselves after having walked through spilled antifreeze. It is important to remember that making antifreeze taste bitter does not make it nontoxic—or even pet safer. There is no way to know if antifreeze leaked from a neighbor’s car will taste bad to your pet, so it’s up to us to keep pets away from all dripped coolant.

Ethylene Glycol Poisoning: Signs, Symptoms & Treatment

As little as a tablespoon of ethylene glycol can cause kidney failure in dogs. Even less—1 teaspoon—can be fatal to cats. Any exposure requires immediate veterinary care. When dogs or cats are exposed to a toxic dose of ethylene glycol, immediate treatment is necessary. Some “pet-safe” antifreeze products contain propylene glycol (PG), which is safer than ethylene glycol if ingested.

Within 30 minutes to 12 hours, a dog or cat may exhibit drooling, vomiting, lack of coordination, twitching, excessive thirst and urination. Within 12-24 hours for cats and 36-72 hours for dogs, these symptoms may subside, actually making you feel as though the pet is getting better. Unfortunately that is not the case. As the kidneys begin to fail, loss of appetite, lethargy, vomiting, seizures and coma will likely next present in the pet.

At the onset, call your veterinarian to assess whether you should induce vomiting in dogs, or just head to veterinary care for either species. If the pet vomits, still get to immediate care, and do NOT induce vomiting if the dog is unconscious, experiencing breathing difficulty or showing any sign of distress or shock—just head to the vet! Veterinarians can administer fomepizole as well as activated charcoal to prevent further absorption of the toxin, but
only if given promptly after ingestion. When too much time passes, EG poisoning is almost 100% fatal without hemodialysis, a process where the animal’s blood is pumped out of their body into a “kidney machine” and then returned to their body after being filtered of toxins.

Prevention
- No brainer: Keep EG and even the safer PG out of paw’s reach!
- Immediately clean up spills and properly dispose of containers.
- Be aware of other products that contain ethylene glycol and keep them away from pets.

De-icing Salts
If you live in a cold climate, you know that de-icing can be accomplished by scraping or shoveling snow or ice. Chemicals make it easier! They are designed to lower the freezing point of water and typically consist of salts (sodium, magnesium calcium and potassium chlorides), alcohols and glycols. In addition to melting snow and ice, they also prevent it from reforming and sticking to surfaces, making removal easier. The problem, however, is that these chemicals irritate our pets’ paws, and can be ingested if they lick their paws and groom. Depending on the type of de-icer, these salts can lead to tummy upsets and skin irritation and worsen kidney problems.

De-icing Salts: Signs, Symptoms & Treatment
Ingesting less than ½ Tablespoon for a small dog or cat or 3 Tablespoons for an extra-large dog can be fatal! Signs and symptoms, which generally present within 3 hours of ingestion, include: burns to the lips and skin, cracked paw pads, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, shortness of breath, disorientation and seizures. Quickly get the animal to your veterinarian where treatment for hypernatremia (too much salt) will include administration of IV fluids and monitoring electrolytes and blood levels.

Providing traction to slippery sidewalks and roadways is important to preventing injury; however, knowledge is power when it comes to the ways this task is accomplished. Allow snow to create a winter wonderland for pets and the people who love them but keep it a safe and merry time for all by protecting precious paws and every inch of those furry bodies!

Prevention
- Steer clear of surfaces coated with any chemicals.
- Get dogs accustomed to shoes when walking on snow melt.
- If the dog refuses to wear paw attire, wash paws with a warm damp washcloth, and then dry after each walk. Keep hair growing between pads trimmed short to prevent chemicals and ice balls from sticking. Try applying paw wax before going out, but still wipe clean after walks.
- Use pet-safe alternatives and ask your city officials to do the same. Morton® Safe-T-Pet® Ice Melt® was developed by veterinarians and is a pet-safe way to melt snow and ice. Completely free of salt and chloride, it is effective to 10°F.
- While kitty litter and gravel won’t melt ice, either can provide traction to help prevent people and pets from slipping on slick surfaces.
- Do not let pets drink from puddles or eat snow, as both could contain these toxic chemicals.
A Milestone Celebration!

PET SITTER WORLD 2019

PSI’s Annual Educational Conference
November 2-4 • Winston-Salem, NC

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF PET-SITTING EXCELLENCE
1994–2019

PSI’s 2019 Pet Sitter World Educational Conference & 25th Anniversary Celebration
A milestone celebration!

Traci Bisson, owner of It Takes a Village Pet Care

Focus on sustainability and community fuels pet-sitting business’s growth

By Meghann Evans, PSI Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Traci Bisson was sitting in her office looking out the window at the fall foliage when she knew there was a disconnect in her life. Her pet’s dog walker was sending her great reports and photos of being outdoors, meanwhile she was back in a traditional office setting.

“This is not my comfort zone,” she thought. “This is not where I’m supposed to be.”

A serial entrepreneur, Traci had owned a marketing and PR firm for 17 years and had started and sold an online membership site for mom entrepreneurs as well. When she closed her marketing company to try something different, she thought she wanted to “go back into the workforce, work for a traditional company with benefits.”

But after two months as the head of marketing for a local university, she knew that was not the route for her and turned in her notice. As she explored what to do next, she thought about the fun her dog walker was having and it sparked a new venture. She got some training and credentials under her belt and started offering services as a solo sitter, but what began as a great opportunity to walk dogs on the side while pursuing educational interests soon grew into something more.

Traci celebrated three years in the pet-sitting industry in November, and her company—It Takes a Village Pet Care in Barrington, New Hampshire—had grown 227% over the last year and had about 225 active clients. She had 10 employees as of November, with plans to hire two more. Her mission-oriented focus and community outreach has helped fuel that growth.

Focusing on your values
It Takes a Village offers weekly dog walking and vacation pet-sitting services in Barrington and Dover, as well as surrounding communities, and provides various pet-care
options to meet the specific needs of each pet—from puppy care and training to adventures that expose pets to new locations and stimulation.

But for Traci, operating a successful business involves more than just providing pet-care visits—there’s a mission behind the company’s efforts.

As Traci was figuring out what to do after her marketing career, she got in touch with her roots—she had studied wildlife management in college and has a Bachelor of Science degree—and began delving more into social permaculture. She thought it would be interesting to build a business on that concept.

Her website explains the ethics of permaculture: care of the earth, care of people, and fair share (return of surplus to the earth and people). Essentially, with every pet-sitting business decision, her team asks, is it good for the earth, is it good for people and pets, and how can we give back?

“I really feel that our focus on sustainability as well as giving back to the community is really what sets us apart,” Traci explains. “It’s resonated really well with clients.”

Her company promotes sustainability in various ways—for example, by trying to reduce the company’s environmental impact and educating pet owners on environmentally-friendly practices such as organic poop bags and compostable cat litter. But they also focus on taking care of and giving back to their community at-large, hence the company name, “It Takes a Village.”

**TIP FOR SUCCESS:** Traci says pet sitters need to be clear on their values and mission. Don’t just ride the wave of the pet business—take time to write a business plan, even if it’s just one page, and know your key messaging, then think about ways to communicate the values of your company to your target market on social media and your website.

**TIP FOR SUCCESS:** Think outside the box to reach your community. There are “so many opportunities to give back to the community and educate pet owners,” Traci says, but you have to have a general love of people and your community. She has seen many people start pet-sitting businesses because they love pets but don’t like people, but if you don’t like both, that will be a hurdle.

**Taking advantage of education**

There are some pet sitters who like both people and pets, but they don’t have the business knowledge they need, Traci notes. Fortunately, there are resources out there. She partnered with the NH Small Business Development Center and took advantage of Facebook mastermind groups to connect with and learn from other passionate pet professionals.

Traci had grown a business before, so that wasn’t an issue—the pet industry was just so unique. The margins are narrow, she explains, so you have to have a great handle on the numbers.

“You’ve got to know what to charge,” Traci says, “and you’ve got to know what you’re worth.”

Having the right training and credentials was also important to Traci when she decided to start pet sitting, because she wanted to set the bar for pet care in New Hampshire.

**Bringing the community together**

When it comes to giving back, Traci’s company does this in a variety of ways, from undertaking an Earth Day roadside cleanup effort to co-hosting a “Howloween” event to benefit a local humane society. But another company effort has created a lot of buzz: a dog walking club.

It started as an idea from one of Traci’s team members: wouldn’t it be great if staff walked their dogs together on the weekends? Traci thought others in the community might want to join them as well, so they tested out a pilot program and in 2019 launched a monthly free walk or hike for dog lovers. Each walk features an expert—for example, a dog trainer or local pet store owner—who discusses a topic of interest and shares tips.

It Takes a Village Dog Walking Club has its own Facebook group and grew to 640 members in less than a year, primarily through word of mouth, as well as promotion in local Facebook groups and buzz from local news features. In fact, too many people were showing up for the monthly walks, so they decided to start asking for an optional donation for charity at each walk. Participants voted online to select their top three local charities, and in 2020, each of those charities will get three months of donations and online promotion, then all three will be promoted during the holidays.

The Dog Walking Club has been a sales pipeline for Traci’s business, with many participants becoming pet-sitting clients thanks to the trust and relationship built through this group.

“People have really come to respect what we’ve created there,” Traci says.
She researched the industry, joined an association, took a pet-industry certification exam, secured pet-sitter insurance and bonding, took a local pet first aid and CPR class, and took advantage of other local training opportunities.

**TIP FOR SUCCESS:** Traci tried to compile a good level of expertise to get started, but says she knew she would need to keep learning. PSI is constantly offering educational information and opportunities, she says—not just working with solo sitters or start-ups, but with expanding businesses as well.

**Spreading the word**
Pet sitters have tried a variety of marketing methods, but one particular strategy has been especially effective for Traci.

“From day one, when I started my business I was a huge networker,” Traci says. She would connect with anyone who was willing to meet with her—local dog trainers, day-cares, veterinarians, pet stores, etc.

**TIP FOR SUCCESS:** When reaching out to other business leaders and pet professionals, Traci says she shares what her business does, asks them to tell her more about their business, and asks how she can help them get more business. By doing this, you’re developing trust and sending them business first, which creates a strong relationship.

Lead generation through digital marketing and SEO is another key to success for Traci. She has an up-to-date website, ittakesavillagenh.com, and also utilizes social media. On social media, Facebook generates the most business for her, since its users—an older demographic—resonate with her business’s price point and professionalism. Understanding your target market is key, Traci says, so you will know how to reach them.

**TIP FOR SUCCESS:** Traci advises pet sitters to take advantage of Google Analytics, post regular blog posts on their websites, and create a community resource page on their sites to list local pet stores or veterinarians, etc. Also create ways for people to engage with your site and enter their email address, she says, such as a newsletter sign-up, a survey, or a free whitepaper with valuable information. On social media, she recommends looking at the analytics Facebook provides for your account. While she has tried some Facebook ads and boosted posts, her growth has primarily come from sharing good, quality content, so see what types of posts your followers are engaging with.

**Building a solid staff**
After working solo for over a year, Traci hired her first employee in June 2018. Now she has about a dozen employees and has been training an assistant manager to take on scheduling so she can work on the business and not in the business.

**TIP FOR SUCCESS:** Consider using tools to help you automate your hiring process. To recruit new employees, Traci has started using JazzHR and says it has boosted the number and quality of resumes her company has received.

Once employees are on board, they go through a five-week training process that begins with in-person training, observation in the field, and pairing up with a seasoned employee for support. Usually by the end of the first week, the new employee is able to see clients on their own. Over the next four weeks, they finish CPR and first aid training and watch FetchFind training videos. All employees get a handbook, and Traci is in the process of creating an intranet where employees can access PDFs, talk to one another, create events and more.

Her company provides employees with a base salary, mileage reimbursement, cell phone reimbursement and tips, and she is always looking for ways to reward her employees, whether it’s giving them $10 Subway gift cards for lunch after a successful week or planning a fun company outing.

She knows there may be older companies in the area that can pay more, so she wants her employees to know that their dedication is greatly appreciated. Once again, her company mission is a drawing card—the focus on community and earth care has really resonated with employees.

When she interviews potential employees, they tell her that working for her company and this industry “would feed their soul.”

“Team members really wanted to be a part of something bigger than them,” Traci says.
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PRO TIPS

Simple Ideas to Boost Business and Improve Your Pet-Care Service

Safety

PREPARE YOUR CAR

If you are pet sitting in a region that experiences cold winters, you want to make sure that your vehicle remains in tip-top shape. Do your tires have good tread, or will you need to use snow tires? Do you have enough antifreeze? Are your windshield wipers still in good shape?

Your vehicle is likely already stocked with the pet supplies you may need, but you should also think about including items that could keep you safe if your car broke down. On its website, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends keeping a winter emergency kit in your vehicle that includes a “cell phone, portable charger, and extra batteries; blankets; food and water; booster cables, flares, tire pump, and a bag of sand or cat litter (for traction); compass and maps; flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries; first-aid kit; and plastic bags (for sanitation).”

But there may be some cases of inclement weather that prevent you from getting out on the roads at all (i.e. a blizzard), so it’s important to have an inclement weather plan in place and to share it with your clients so everyone is clear about who will check on the pets (perhaps a neighbor?) if roads become impassible.

Business Practices

THANK NEW CLIENTS

When you sit for new clients, no doubt you want to impress them and (hopefully) gain repeat business. The best way to impress pet lovers is to provide exceptional care to their pets, but some professional pet sitters also like to take extra steps to make a great first impression and thank new clients for their service. There are a variety of ways you can thank new clients, whether it’s by leaving a small gift, a “Welcome Home” or “Thank You” card, an informational brochure from PSI on a pet-safety related topic, or a discount coupon for their next reservation. Some pet sitters like to leave branded items to keep their business top of mind, whether that’s a magnet with their logo and contact information, a pen, keychain, etc.

The type of item you leave may also depend on the length and type of service you are providing that new client. PSI member Lisa Atkins, owner of Sweetpees Pet Sitters, says: “For new clients that I do overnights for I print out a few of my best photos of their pet from my stay and leave them on the fridge with my card. I love photography and get great compliments. Clients love the surprise. When I go back the pics are always displayed somewhere!”

Marketing

CO-PROMOTE YOUR SERVICES

Are there other businesses in your community that you have ties with or that offer complementary services to your pet-sitting business? Consider contacting the business owners to see if they would be interested in co-promotional opportunities. For example, PSI offers a free Business Salutes Coupon download in the Members area of petsit.com, which you can customize with your business name and contact information before printing and providing to other businesses to share with their customers. Visit the downloads page in the Members area and select “Pet-Sitter Forms” to find these coupon downloads.

There are a variety of other ways you can work with local businesses to co-promote your services. Perhaps you could co-host a community event like a pet festival or a charity auction. If your company offers pet taxi services, you could work with a local groomer to offer groomer trips. Spend some time brainstorming ways you could partner with local businesses for the benefit of all. The start of a new year is a great time to test out new partnerships!

“We can’t please everyone, and the sooner we learn this lesson, the smarter we’ll be.”

-Patti J. Moran
Pet Sitting for Profit
If longevity is an important measure of success, then Pet Sitters International had a lot to celebrate in 2019—from PSI’s 25th anniversary in March to the work anniversaries of three long-time employees later in the year.

For more than two decades now, PSI has been at the forefront of pet-sitter education, and the strength of our organization lies not only in our wonderful members, but in PSI’s dedicated employees as well. Three of these employees have been with PSI for over half of its 25 years, constantly working to ensure that PSI members always have access to the best resources and tools in the business.

In 2019, Michelle Boles, graphics and web content manager, celebrated her 20-year work anniversary with PSI. From designing PSI’s holiday observance images for social media to laying out the magazine issues, Michelle works to keep PSI “looking good”—online, in print and with products.

Debbie Leonard, manager of office systems and information technology, celebrated 15 years of working for PSI. Whether she’s handling AV at PSI’s annual conference or running payroll, Debbie is working behind the scenes to ensure PSI’s systems run smoothly.

Beth Stultz-Hairson, president, also celebrated her 15-year PSI anniversary in 2019. Beth oversees the association’s day-to-day operations, everything from PSI’s marketing and communications efforts to educational campaigns and programs.

Experience that benefits members
These three employees’ long-time experience with PSI benefits members in a variety of ways.

“When you have three employees with such institutional longevity managing various aspects of the organization’s operations, it creates a sense of stability and a strong foundation of knowledge that benefits both pet sitters and the industry at large,” says PSI Founder and CEO Patti J. Moran. “I am grateful for the dedicated service these employees have provided to PSI and its members.”

Debbie has worked on a variety of technical upgrades for PSI over the years and is always willing to help PSI members troubleshoot when they call in with technical questions of their own.

“The more I learn about changing technologies helps us and our members stay up to date,” Debbie says.

And for Michelle, working on PSI products and graphics over the past 20 years has given her a good sense of what members want to see.

“Reaching out to members for input on new products has given me good insight into their needs and has helped PSI offer quality products to fill those needs,” Michelle explains. “My involvement with the
development of PSI’s educational/membership materials has also allowed me to design quality pieces that relate to our members and those in the pet-care industry."

Beth’s success in overseeing PSI’s day-to-day operations and helping chart the course of the organization reflects her many years of listening to pet sitters’ needs and designing innovative solutions.

“We always say there is strength in numbers, and the opportunity to serve such a large number of professional pet sitters and dog walkers over the years has given me an inside look into the needs, challenges and successes of the industry,” Beth says. “While each PSI member is unique, there are universal aspects of the industry relevant to every pet sitter—and with our experience, staff members are able to create and implement business-tool and educational-resource offerings that can best meet the needs of all of our members.”

**Evolution in the industry**

In addition to getting to know pet sitters better over the years, these three employees have gotten a front-row seat to the evolution of the pet-care industry as a whole, and they all say technology has been the biggest area of change.

“When I first started to work here, we were still sending out paper print-ready pet-sitting service contracts,” Debbie recalls.

Pet sitters’ commitment to the highest quality customer service and pet care has remained consistent, Beth notes, but technology has changed the way professional pet sitters operate.

“The ability to embrace technology while still keeping the personal touch that is necessary in pet sitting has been one of our industry’s biggest strengths,” Beth says.

And it’s not only pet sitters that have evolved with the rapidly changing technologies. PSI has also embraced technology to better serve members and provide new opportunities.

Michelle explains: “With the change from using paper documents for contracts and communications or even print advertising, to ‘going green’ and switching to electronic communications and downloadable business forms and even instructional videos on how members can market their business on social media, PSI has remained at the forefront and continued to provide members with access to the most up-to-date educational opportunities to start and grow their businesses.”

**Looking to the future**

These employees have seen the professional pet-sitting industry change and grow over the past few decades, Patti notes, but they are not just focused on the past.

“They’re looking to the future and harnessing their insight and experience to help 21st century pet sitters grow their businesses and thrive in their ever-changing local economies,” Patti says.

As the industry grows, Beth sees PSI’s commitment to “pet-sitting excellence through education” as more important than ever before.

“Embracing continuing education is what distinguishes the best professional pet-sitting business owners,” Beth says, “and PSI has been able to use technology to offer a growing catalog of educational resources to members, including a monthly online learning subscription, online certificate programs and courses, and even an online conference.”

If you ask Beth, Michelle and Debbie why they work as hard as they do, they will tell you it’s because they believe in PSI and they believe in you.

“Being with PSI for so long has made co-workers and members feel like family,” Beth explains, “so the direction the association takes isn’t the result of impersonal business decisions—we do everything with our members’ best interest at heart.”

Thank you, Michelle, Debbie and Beth, for your dedicated years of service to PSI. We know that you remain committed to ensuring our members have the best tools and support in the industry, and we can’t wait to see the great resources and innovations you come up with during PSI’s next 25 years!
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It’s every pet parent’s—and pet sitter’s—nightmare—a lost pet! While it’s a scenario no one wants to think about, it’s vital for pet-care professionals to be prepared, whether a pet is lost on your watch or a client reaches out for help. Finding Your Lost Cat: The Practical Cat-Specific Guide for Your Happy Reunion, the latest non-fiction title in author Dusty Rainbolt’s Cat Scene Investigator feline problem-solving series, is truly a must-have for every cat sitter’s bookshelf (or Kindle account).

As Rainbolt explains, her new book is different because it is both species specific and science based. In the book’s introduction, the author promises: “I’m only going to tell you how to find your cat. Cats are not little dogs physically or behaviorally. Techniques that prove successful in recovering lost dogs won’t work for kitties because cats and dogs respond different to stress, frightening situations and strange people.”

And it’s a promise she delivers on. From sharing what to do as soon as you realize a cat is missing to explaining lost cat behavior to sharing tips for effective lost cat signs and advanced searching strategies, the guide shares information that every pet parent and pet professional should know. Better yet, the information is all shared in an easy-to-understand, conversational manner.

While we hope this is information you will not need this year, this is definitely a book you should add to your 2020 reading list! —Beth Stultz-Hairston, PSI

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No one really enjoys paying taxes. But, as a professional pet-sitting business owner, a big part of your job is being a business owner. For many, the pet sitting comes easy—from dog walks and cat visits to continuing education in pet behavior, health and first aid—and the “pet part” is the “best part.” The other part, however, the “business part” of paperwork, documentation, scheduling, taxes and accounting, is not nearly as fun for most—but equally important. Pet sitting isn’t a side gig for you—you are operating a legitimate business. So, staying on top of your accounting and understanding tax deductions is essential—and doing this can save you time and money.

**Choosing an Accountant**

In a previous survey conducted by PSI, 48 percent of members indicated they use an accountant for their pet-sitting businesses, while 52 percent choose to handle taxes and accounting on their own.

Keep in mind, your tax requirements will vary by your country, business structure and income, so it’s advisable to reach out to a local tax professional with any specific questions you may have.

Although most pet sitters who responded to PSI’s last survey indicated they handle their own taxes, it’s a really good idea to find an accountant to assist you with necessary recording keeping, unless your pre-pet sitting career involved bookkeeping or tax preparation.

Shop around when searching for an accountant and look for one that specializes in helping small-business owners. You should ask local pet sitters or other local small-business owners for recommendations and then interview a few accountants before deciding.

Remember, accounting fees and expertise vary, so don’t be shy about asking for fee information, credentials and references from the accountants you meet.

An accountant will help you set up your books, do your payroll, and apply for any necessary identification numbers. An accountant can also save you some time by supplying the forms you’ll need, such as state and federal payroll tax forms.

Although accounting procedures may at first seem overwhelming to a new business owner, a good accountant will soon have you trained and knowledgeable about the financial side of your business. Even if you still opt to handle taxes on your own, paying for a consultation with a local accountant can give you assurance that you have the information you need to handle this aspect of your business yourself.

**Need-to-Know Tax Information**

Whether you choose to work with an accountant or handle taxes on your own, it’s important to have a working knowledge of tax requirements for small-business owners.
To learn more about the “need-to-know” tax knowledge pet-care business owners should have, we reached out to U.S.-based CPA Evan Hutcheson.

A Q&A with Evan Hutcheson of Evan Hutcheson, CPA, LLC (evanhcpa.com)

Should pet-sitting and dog-walking business owners file taxes quarterly or annually?
Like most tax answers, it depends. The owners will file taxes annually, no matter what—but could be required to make quarterly payment if their income is high enough throughout the year. Small-business owners should really look into filing quarterly taxes to avoid being hit with a huge tax bill at the end of the year.

Because they are self-employed, how can they best determine how much of their income they should “set aside” for state and federal taxes?
While other sources of income and deductible expenses will play a role in this, it would usually be between 20 and 33 percent, depending upon income.

Can mileage and automobile-related fees both be deducted (or only one or the other)? What proof do they need of mileage to be able to claim it?
[A business owner] can either claim mileage or actual expenses plus vehicle depreciation. If you want to use mileage, which is the more popular choice, you need to have a log book indicating the date, the destination, the mileage and the business purpose.

If a business has staff sitters (employees or independent contractors), what do they need to provide to their staff sitters for tax purposes?
If staff sitters are independent contractors (ICs), the ICs should fill out a W-9 for records. Then, at the end of the year, they should issue those contractors 1099s. If employees are used, employees would need to fill out W-4s and the owner would need to set up payroll with the government so that payroll taxes can be submitted.

For businesses with staff, do they deduct fees paid to staff as business expenses and do they need to use a Schedule C?
Businesses can deduct staff pay. Sole proprietors and single member LLCs can file schedule C. Partnerships and multimember LLCs file Form 1065, which is a separate tax return altogether. Corporations file an 1120 or 1120-S.

What are some business deductions that pet sitters and dog walkers may not typically think of?
Business deductions pet sitters and dog walkers may not think of include dog food (if provided to clients), business use of their home, business supplies, advertising expenses, office expenses, professional fees (such as association memberships) and travel-related expenses for professional events and conferences.

Do you have more questions? Evan Hutcheson can be reached via his website, www.evanhcpa.com, or by phone at (615) 727-2295.

Tips for Canadian Pet Sitters
For Canadian-specific tax advice, we also reached out to Debbie Pearl-Weinberg, Executive Director, Tax & Estate Planning at CIBC Financial Planning & Advice. She shared that tax returns are generally filed annually, and, in most cases, quarterly or monthly installments are required. She advises Canadian pet sitters to visit this website link for more information on installment requirements for individuals as well as information on determining how much you should plan to set aside for federal and provincial/territorial taxes: https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/about-your-tax-return/making-payments-individuals/paying-your-income-tax-instalments.html. She also shared that Canadian pet sitters are able to deduct expenses they incur using an automobile for their businesses and recommends visiting this link to calculate the amount of motor vehicle expenses you can deduct: https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/businesses/topics/sole-proprietorships-partnerships/business-expenses/motor-vehicle-expenses.html.

Regarding tax returns for Canadian pet-sitting businesses using staff, Pearl-Weinberg recommends first reviewing the CRA website (www.canada.ca) to understand the differences between an employee and an independent contractor. She advised that employee-related expenses (including income paid) should be reported on a form T4, but those using independent contractors may need to report payments on form T4A.

Additional resources
The following websites may provide helpful information regarding your tax obligations, as well as tips on tax deductions for small-business owners.

U.S.:
www.irs.gov
www.usa.gov
www.score.org

Canada:
www.canada.ca
www.turbotax.intuit.ca
www.taxtips.ca

Remember, tax laws change, and tax obligations vary depending upon your business. If you have any questions about eligible deductions, filing taxes or your tax obligations, consult a tax professional. —The PSI staff
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According to PSI’s 2018 State of the Industry Survey, Facebook and Instagram are the top two platforms currently being used by professional pet sitters for business promotions.

PSI expects more pet sitters will begin to use the latest features (such as Facebook’s Facebook Live option) and will continue to use platforms such as Instagram—with its focus on photos and videos—to connect with current and potential clients in a more meaningful way.

**Using hashtags to find potential clients**

One of the benefits of Instagram is that you can use the platform to find pets and pet owners in your local area.

For example, if you live in Austin, Texas, start by searching for the hashtag #Austin. You’ll be able to see photos from users that have included that hashtag. The users with pets in their photos are likely pet owners, which means they could be potential clients. So, follow these accounts! They’ll likely be interested in seeing who their new follower is and follow you back. This enables you to build an online connection with a potential new client, or at the very least someone who could refer your business to someone else.

Also be sure to take a closer look at the images under your city’s hashtag that include pets to see if there are any other hashtags they use. For example, when searching photos tagged with #Austin, I also found a photo that used the hashtag #caninesofAustin. Searching this hashtag resulted in finding accounts for even more people who were posting photos of their pets—and were from Austin.

Instagram also allows users to follow hashtags (and not just individual accounts). So, be sure to follow the hashtags that are relevant to your business and area, so it is even easier for you to find accounts of people who are posting pet photos in your area.

In addition to hashtags, Instagram users can also geotag their photos. This simply means that they can indicate their location when the photo is posted—this geotag can be for a city, but even for a specific neighborhood or business location.

When a post includes a geotag, you can see the location above the image. Instagram allows you to click on that tag (the city, state) to find even more local Instagram users who may not have used a particular hashtag, but have indicated where they are located through the geotag—so search the geotag also and look for photos that include pets.

Again, these Instagram users could be potential clients. So, follow them too.

But, don’t just follow them—be sure to like photos they post of their pets—and even comment occasionally, when appropriate. This online interaction allows pet owners to become more familiar with your local business—and increases the likelihood that they will take the next step in learning more about your services when they need pet care.

**Building credibility and social proof**

Recently I came across the Instagram account for Distinctive Pet Sitting, a PSI member business owned by Lisa Howard in Atlanta, Ga. I was instantly impressed by her company’s use of the platform—particularly their professional images and branding—and reached out to her to learn more.

Lisa said Distinctive Pet Sitting first joined Instagram in July 2017 and generally posts four times per week. You can view the account at instagram.com/distinctivepetsitting.

The images the company posts are high quality, incorporate the company’s colors and typically also include the logo—all great for branding! For (continued)
You know you wouldn’t steal from your clients, but being bonded can give them extra peace of mind and boost your business.
At some point in a pet sitting or dog walking career, there is a high probability that, at least once, care will be needed for a dog who is aggressive or reactive on leash. Some of these dogs take issue with very specific targets such as only cars, or only strangers, or only other dogs. A few will attack anything that moves. Many dogs reserve their fixation for common things like wheels or for unusual things like garden gnomes. For the sake of brevity and clarity and because there is such a wide variety of factors involved, for the remainder of this article the word “trigger” will serve as an all-embracing term for anything a dog may be overly focused on while on a leash walk.

What is the difference between reactive and aggressive?
Some use the term reactive to describe dogs who only bark and the term aggressive is reserved for dogs who lunge or snap. A few refer to reactive as aggression without a bite and aggressive as aggression with a bite. Others believe reactive means the dog is rude or hyper focused or easily startled, but is not aggressive. Many think they are different words for the same thing. This discrepancy demonstrates that there is, in fact, no accepted or formal difference between the terms aggressive and reactive. Rather, the difference is based
primarily on personal opinion. For the remainder of this article, the term reactive will be used to mean both reactive and aggressive.

Why are some dogs reactive and others aren’t—and why do some react to things that aren’t even threatening?

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. So too is fear, threat, frustration, interest and more. It is not up to one to assign nor dismiss the emotions or perception of another. If a dog is afraid or threatened, then they are afraid or threatened—even if you perceive the trigger to be ridiculously benign. Likewise, I am afraid of spiders and whether or not someone else thinks spiders are terrifying is irrelevant to my fear. I’m not choosing my reaction any more than a dog is choosing their reaction to a trigger. Reactions are determined by multiple factors, many of which we may or may not be privy to. I have no idea why I fear spiders, yet here we are. The development of leash reactivity may be due to genetic tendencies, lack of or negative experience during critical developmental stages, inappropriate early socialization, unpleasant or even traumatic experiences, punitive training, inappropriate handling, or any other number of (or likely combination of) factors. When it comes down to it, though, none of this really matters. The only thing that matters is that they have this behavior and what specific triggers are involved.

When is a behavior reactive and when is it just rude?

In my opinion, any dog that is attempting to approach a trigger in an overly zealous and out of control manner, be it to say hi or to attack, is problematic. This includes but is not limited to reactivity, rudeness, lunging, pulling, scrambling, army crawling, standing on back legs, barking, growling, yodeling, snapping, jumping, humping, and more. Such behavior may trigger a defensive tendency from other dogs, may scare adults or children, is embarrassing and puts the handler at risk. I’ve encountered owners with injuries from walking their dog such as dislocated, sprained or strained joints, broken bones, torn or pulled muscles, tendon and ligament ruptures or damage, cuts, scrapes, bruises, leash burn, and more while others were pulled into traffic, down hills, or across uneven terrain.

I’m strong enough, what harm is it to just drag them away?

While dragging dogs away from the target of their reactivity may seem like a quick and easy solution, it is not a good choice in the long run. If it were, there would be no need for this article, and I wouldn’t have to work with so many leash reactive dogs! Adding frustration to an already frustrated dog can, over time, increase intensity and severity of the behavior and thus increase risk to victims, who may be elderly humans, children, puppies in critical periods of development, or anyone else. It is also not uncommon for the aggressor to sustain injuries, such as to bones, muscle, joints, trachea, chest, neck, back, spine, joints, nails, and more. Further, with repetition over time this “resistance training” can actually make the dog stronger and more aggressive. However, what I would consider to be the most harmful of all, is the fact that reactive dogs are experiencing ongoing distress. This is known to impact learning, immune system, cognitive function, tissue repair, the entire endocrine system, and so much more. As caregivers for pets, we are obligated to provide the minimal standards of care known as the five freedoms:

1. FREEDOM FROM HUNGER AND THIRST
2. FREEDOM FROM DISCOMFORT
3. FREEDOM FROM PAIN, INJURY OR DISEASE
4. FREEDOM TO EXPRESS NORMAL BEHAVIOR
5. FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND DISTRESS

What are common training mistakes that do not help leash aggression?

The most common attempts at training I see which are more harmful than helpful to leash reactive dogs are: required sit-stays while the trigger passes by, not allowing the dog to look at the trigger, feeding the dog before he notices the trigger, and “corrections” or punitive training. While these approaches make sense to humans, dogs are not humans. It is important to understand how dogs perceive the world and learn. Verbal scolding or corrections such as leash pops, shocks, prong collars, or hitting teaches dogs to not only stop communicating but also to not trust their handler. While such methods may appear to be helpful, they can create a false sense of confidence,
and the inevitable future fallout down the road may be worse than the original problem. Again, if it were that easy I wouldn’t have 35 leash reactive clients.

What can a pet sitter or dog walker do to resolve leash reactivity?
Like with any other type of aggression, only highly skilled and experienced behavior modification professionals should attempt to address leash reactivity. Even incredibly gifted dog trainers who do not have specific and formal training in behavior modification should not attempt to resolve most leash reactivity cases. Behavior modification is a skill that requires a great deal of education and experience. There are formal techniques and protocols that must be followed in order to be truly effective.

What is the best way to prevent the behavior from getting worse?
First, teaching loose leash walking with positive reinforcement is the best way to instill alternative behaviors, increase communication, and build trust. This usually requires keeping the dog away from triggers by altering the walking route or driving to a trigger free area or in extreme cases eliminating walks altogether. The most damaging thing is to keep putting the dog in situations in which it is repeatedly exposed to the trigger and allowed to go over threshold. Begin by finding the reward the dog likes best. This may be affection, a certain toy, or most commonly food (such as chicken, salmon, steak, etc.) and should be reserved for association with the trigger. Next, find the distance at which the dog can see the trigger but remain below threshold enough to accept the reward. Remain at this distance or further, ensure the leash is loose and after the dog has noticed the trigger, praise and reward. Keep in mind, we want to reward for approach and being close, but not for moving away. Combining leash skills with positive associations in proximity to the trigger can significantly improve minor leash issues and set up severe leash behaviors for professional behavior modification.

If I’m hired to walk a dog but am not supposed to walk them near triggers, what am I supposed to do instead?
Loose leash walking in the house, in the yard, and right in front of the house is an incredibly valuable tool. A 20-minute walk without training is roughly equivalent to a 10 minute or less walk with training. This is paws down the most useful thing that can be done for highly leash reactive dogs. Additionally, adding in enrichment; useful skills like watch me or behind me or targeting; incorporating fun games like treat hide and seek; or trick training are all wonderful ways to tire out a frustrated dog brain. Talk to the owner about the importance of managing and preventing leash reactivity and the value of alternative physically and mentally challenging games.

When should I or the owner contact a behavior professional?
I strongly recommend that a professional help as soon as the problematic leash behaviors are noticed. This may develop over time as a young dog ages, or may escalate from rudeness, or may be overt agonistic aggression right off the bat. There are very subtle nuances and factors that must be taken into consideration and will very likely worsen if handled incorrectly or not at all. My very favorite and most successful leash reactivity cases are those in which the dog walker or pet sitter are on board! Collaboration is the most valuable tool available to these cases. Typically, the pet sitter attends occasional or frequent sessions and is paid to be there! They follow the protocols until specific criteria are met, and then next steps are implemented. It is not at all unusual for the pet sitter to book additional sessions with the dog when clients don’t want to deal with the training themselves but would rather the walker do it for them! I have more than a few clients who went from occasional walks to two walks per day, seven days a week when the sitter got on board. I recommend reaching out to your local behavior professional to let them know you are open to working together on such cases. I have a list of cooperative and skilled pet sitters I recommend to my leash reactive clients who already know what to do, and they are often booked months in advance. Such collaborations can really be win-win situations for everyone.

Of course, when it comes to any behavior, there is no one size fits all approach. Rather, there is a general plan that applies to all cases with specific details that are customized to specific cases. I hope the information here can provide you will a few ideas for getting started, some things to avoid, and some information to help you better understand leash reactivity. Further, by working with a behavior consultant as well as the owner, you may just set yourself apart from the rest, book more appointments, and have long-term and dedicated clients.
Consider putting these activities on your company’s to-do list for January and February.

December
30-January 3
It’s time to ring in the New Year and plan for another year of business success. Even if New Year’s visits will keep you busy, start brainstorming ideas for new business goals, social media strategies, etc., then block off a few hours in the next week to map out your plans. Search “SMART goals” on petsit.com for goal-setting tips.

January 6-10
You’ve survived the busy winter holiday season! Treat yourself to a fun outing, whether it’s a trip to the spa, an afternoon at the movies, or an informal dinner with friends. If you have employees, consider taking them out to eat or giving them a small gift or sweet treat to let them know how much you appreciate them.

January 13-17
PSI will be offering two great conference opportunities again this year—an online conference and an in-person conference—so be sure to visit petsit.com/conference for details. Conferences provide a great opportunity to learn and network with other pet professionals!

January 20-24
Do you plan and schedule your business’s social media posts in advance? If not, now’s a great time to start creating a monthly social-media calendar to streamline your efforts. Free social media images for upcoming pet-related observances are available in a photo album in PSI’s private Facebook group, Professional Pet Sitters Chat.

Facebook group, Professional Pet Sitters Chat.

January 27-31
January 28th is National Plan for Vacation Day, so make a commitment to yourself to take time away from your business this year. If you haven’t already, go ahead and finalize your vacation dates for the year, and notify your clients and/or employees about the dates that you will be unavailable.

February 3-7
As you move forward in this new year and strive to take your business to the next level, spend some time reviewing PSI’s Pet-Sitting Success Path at petsit.com/successpath. Determine where you are on the path, then view the milestones you need to achieve and create an actionable plan for how you will achieve them.

February 10-14
Are you trying new social media strategies this year? Visit petsit.com and read the blog post “11 types of content pet sitters should be posting on social media” for some fresh ideas. As always, be sure to visit PSI’s private Facebook group, Professional Pet Sitters Chat, to download free images you can use on your social-media pages for the next month.

February 17-21
February is Pet Dental Health Month, so brush up on your pet dental hygiene knowledge this week and share educational information with pet owners. PSI has a blog post about this topic at petsit.com, “9 tips for brushing a pet’s teeth.”

February 24-28

Enter your ZIP/Postal code at petsit.com/locate to verify you are listed.
Unfortunately, scammers target every industry, including pet sitting. Fortunately, it's typically easy to spot a scam—and there's always one foolproof measure to ensure you don't get scammed: NEVER accept a pet-sitting assignment or payment until you've met a potential client in person at the initial consultation.

PSI is regularly contacted by members and non-members wanting to learn more about scams or determine if an email they've received is fraudulent.

To better help you understand how to spot potential scams and what to do if you receive one, let's discuss some of the most common questions PSI receives:

I think I received a scam email. Am I in danger?

The short answer is likely “no.” While we cannot speak to every scam, we can tell you that all of the scam emails we have seen pet sitters receive are intended to ultimately get the scammer money—not to cause any physical harm to the recipient. These scammers ask for your address to send you a fraudulent check (not to come to your home).

If you receive an email that you know is a scam, simply delete it. If you receive an email you are not sure about, there's no harm in replying for more information. If the “pet owner” responds back and asks for your address, it's very likely a scammer (unless he or she may think that you board or are a doggie daycare where the pet will be dropped off). If you are still not sure if the potential client may be a scammer, you can always reply to explain that you come to the client's home and will need his or her address to verify they are in your service area.

Again, most scammers are trying to obtain your mailing address to send you a fraudulent check. However, if you ever feel threatened or in danger by a communication you receive from a potential client/client/scammer, notify your local law enforcement.

What is the purpose of these scam emails?

As mentioned above, most scammers want to obtain your mailing address so they can mail you a fraudulent check. We find that most of the scammers follow the same steps: after making initial contact (if you respond), they ultimately want to send you a check (often cashier's check) for their payment in advance (and often inform you that they will need to send a check for over the amount they owe you and ask that you send the remaining money to another company/service provider for them). The checks are forgeries (although they often look legitimate) and some pet sitters have deposited the checks before they realized they were being scammed.

While the most recent scam we've learned of does not seem to be targeting pet sitters on the PSI Pet Sitter Locator (but on a similar site), we want you all to be aware. The new wave of scams reported to us recently involve the same old scheme but with different players.

(continued)
Most pet sitters report receiving these scams by email, but some have also received scams by text. Here are a few examples of common scam communications we’ve seen members receive.

Hello, This is Barry. I saw your AD on PSI..please email me @lord.barry86@gmail.com if you are still available for further details as i have 2DOGS in need of care. Cheers!!!

Hello,
I just came across your post as a pet sitter on www.petsit.com and I would love to have a chat with you concerning it....Can i contract your services for my pet,a Bolognese dog by the name Sophia?I will be needing your services starting from April 18th which would stretch till may 17th.I’m flexible with the start time but i would prefer between the hours of 10am-11am when i will be off to work. At least a minimum of 1hr daily,(MONDAY - FRIDAYS)
The service include WALKING,FEEDING AND GENERAL CARE....You will be caring for her at my rented suite. Can you tell me the exact location(i.e the closest Major Intersection t your home)so i can calculate how close it will be to my rented suite and also to make further arrangements for the job..I await your positive response.

My name is Louis Rourke, 47 years old. I got your contact while searching for Dogsitter closeby online. I need your service to house my Dog for 3 weeks, from 20th of March to 12th of April 2016.

Name: Harri
Sex: Male
Age: 3 years old
Breed: Labrador Retriever

Let me know if you can board him for that period and please let me know how much money it will cost for boarding, feeding and all that he may need during his stay with you.

My dog is well behave, cool headed, energetic, easy to control and he gets used to it’s handler easily, so as for behavior and getting along with him, you will have no single problem.

I will be waiting to hear from you in time.

Thanks

Hello, I just saw your post as a pet caregiver on www.petsit.com and I’m hoping to talk with you more about it. How many years of professional pet sitting experience have you accumulated while working with Pets? Can I contract your services for my pet, a Samoyed dog by the name Bella? I shall be needing services starting from August 4th and would stretch till September 3rd. I’m flexible with start time but preferably between 10AM-11AM, when i will be off to work. At least a minimum of 1hrs daily, (MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAYS), Services include walking, feeding and general care. You will be caring for her at my rented suite. Can you tell me your exact location (i.e the closest Major Intersection to your home) so I can calculate how close it will be to my rented suite and also to make further arrangements for the task. I look forward to reading from you soon.

I will be offering you $400 weekly, i will be needing your services for 4 hours at any suitable time of yours. Bonus will be paid if there are any overtime, If you believe you are fit for this position in as much you will prove yourself to be a reliable and good person, I will instruct my financial clerk to pay for the first week before our arrival so as to secure your service in advance and to show our commitment on our part.

I will be waiting to hear from you.

A different type of scam: In 2018, we also became aware of a new scam targeting pet sitters—and this scam didn’t come from a fake “potential client.” Instead, the email was in regard to a United Nations Grant and included the PSI logo. This email is, of course, fraudulent. This particular email was distributed by nationgrantunited@gmail.com. Neither the United Nations nor PSI would use a Gmail address (all official PSI communications come from the petsit.com domain).

Can scammers get my contact information from the PSI website?
Security measures were added to PSI’s Locator a few years back to ensure that scammers couldn’t simply “scrape” emails off the site (i.e., run a program to copy all the email addresses members have listed on their Locator profiles). This means that scammers aren’t pulling large lists of pet sitters’ email addresses from our site; however, scammers can find email addresses for any pet sitter whose contact information is listed publicly—on the PSI Locator, Google, Yelp, your own business website, etc.

We have also seen some scammers contact PSI pet sitters through the “Contact Us” form on individual Locator profiles. While we don’t see this happen very often (most scammers are not going to take the time to individually message multiple pet sitters through an online form), we do include a warning about scams in every email that goes out to members when a client contacts them through our Locator.
You may have also seen that some scammers will specifically mention that they found you on PSI’s website, or another site, even though that’s not necessarily true. We’ve heard from pet sitters who have never been members but received emails about being “found on the PSI site.” Many scammers used scripts from other scammers, and—as the largest association for professional pet sitters—PSI is likely just a well known company for scammers to mention.

Protecting your pet-sitting business from scammers
If you receive a suspicious email, the FBI encourages you to file a complaint at www.IC3.gov. While you’re there, be sure to read up on tips to help you avoid being scammed, such as the following:

- Counterfeit Cashier’s Check
- Inspect the cashier’s check.
- Ensure the amount of the check matches in figures and words.
- Check to see that the account number is not shiny in appearance.
- Be watchful that the drawer’s signature is not traced.
- Official checks are generally perforated on at least one side.
- Inspect the check for additions, deletions or other alterations.
- Contact the financial institution on which the check was drawn to ensure legitimacy.
- Obtain the bank’s telephone number from a reliable source, not from the check itself.
- Be cautious when dealing with individuals outside of your own country.

We might add that the old adage “if something sounds too good to be true it probably is” definitely applies here.

New pet sitters may be particularly susceptible to this type of scam and dismiss warning signs if they are in a rush to get clients.

While scam emails are common, however, don’t assume that every email that seems a little “strange” is a scam. Some potential clients may not know what questions to ask or may not be good communicators. There’s no harm in replying to an email to ask for more information.

Just remember that you don’t need to share your mailing address with a potential client and you should never accept an assignment or payment without meeting the clients in person at an initial consultation.

Remember, it’s far better to spend your time on good clients than to waste your time and money on fishy ones!
As a professional pet sitter or dog walker, you’re probably looking for ways to get the word out about your business, and while there are numerous forms of advertising you can try, it’s also great to get free publicity for your business. This is where reaching out to local media comes in.

If you are quoted in a local news article—or better yet, your business is featured in an article or news segment—that helps spread the word about you and your pet-sitting business. It also helps establish you as a local pet-care expert, which will have a positive impact on your business and help build your credibility. Investing your time in public relations efforts can yield great rewards for your business.

But how do you get started? Here are five tips for reaching out to local media:

1. **Have a plan.**

   Building relationships with your local media and getting your business mentioned in local media outlets doesn’t usually happen overnight. It takes time and requires you to be consistent with your outreach as you share timely and relevant information with reporters, so it’s great to sit down and create a media relations plan.

   For example, think about who you should contact. As part of your plan, you will want to create a list of local media contacts that you will be reaching out to regularly. On your list, include journalists from TV stations, newspapers, radio stations, prominent community blogs, local magazines—any outlets that share news and stories about your area. You may also want to contact your local Chamber of Commerce to see if they already have a media list prepared, then you can modify or expand that list.

   Also consider what types of information you will want to share with the media and when. It is helpful to create a schedule mapping out your planned press releases and media pitches for the quarter or the year, but be flexible. If something newsworthy happens for your business, you need to be able to adjust your schedule to make room for those news items.

2. **Build relationships.**

   You want to develop relationships with local journalists, so do your research so you know who you’re talking to. Read their articles; watch their news segments. You also want to make sure you are contacting the right people. Ask yourself, “Is this topic the kind of thing that this outlet or this particular journalist covers?”

   Many news outlets have staff or newsroom listings on their websites where you can easily find their contact information and their particular role at the outlet or the topics they typically cover, but if they don’t or you’re still not sure who to contact, you can always call the front desk and ask who is the most appropriate person to send a press release about your particular topic.

   While most reporters prefer email, that may not always be the case, so check the contact information pages on the news sites to see if any contact preferences are listed. You may also decide to initially reach out to the reporter or editor by phone to introduce yourself and let them know that you would be happy to be a resource any time.

   While you will likely be reaching out to journalists with press releases or story ideas related to your business or area of expertise, that is not the only thing you should send them. You can start off by simply emailing a journalist to let them know that you enjoyed their story about a particular topic. Or if you hear a news tip in the community that you think is the kind of thing that reporter covers, feel free to send it their way. Remember, you are trying to position yourself as a resource.

   If the reporter has a work-related social media account, you can always follow them, like and share their posts, comment on their stories, and compliment them for a job well done. As they start to see your name pop up, they may want to know more about you or decide to contact you if a relevant story comes up.
When you do reach out to reporters, make sure you are sharing information that is interesting and timely. A common item you may send is a press release announcing an event, trend or other news. Perhaps your business is expanding to offer a unique service that is completely new to your area, or maybe you’re hosting an event to raise money for charity. Type up a press release about it and send it off to your local media outlets.

Some of your press releases or media pitches may be seasonal, such as pet-safety tips for pet owners ahead of the winter holidays, or they may be related to new local or national data that relates to your industry and community. Be creative—think of something that would have wide appeal to the audience of that particular TV station, magazine, newspaper, etc.

As a professional pet sitter, you have taken the time to make sure you are operating a legitimate, professional pet service, and you want that professionalism to come across in every interaction with media and the public. So be sure to return all media calls promptly and be polite and professional no matter what. Also remember that anything you say—whether it’s on the phone, on paper, on social media, in a text or in an email—can be used by the reporter, so don’t say something you wouldn’t want to see in print.

Before an interview, try to anticipate the possible questions you may be asked. Go ahead and have two or three key message points prepared in advance, and practice saying them. These points should be relevant to the reporter’s interview topic, but they should also be relevant to your goals of being an expert in pet care, and hopefully you will be able to work them into your interview responses.

If you are preparing for a television interview, it may help to practice answering questions in front of a mirror, with a friend or on camera (a smart phone will do). That will allow you to see whether your mannerisms, body language or pace of speech need some fine tuning. And if they do, that’s okay. As they say, practice makes perfect!

When you go for the actual interview, wear clothing that makes you feel professional—perhaps branded apparel with your business logo—and talk in a way that any viewer could understand you, not using complicated jargon.

You may reach out to media with no response for a while, but that’s okay. Keep sending out interesting content and offering to be a resource. It is fine to follow up to see if a reporter received your information and if they have any questions, but don’t bombard them or beg them to run your story. They may simply not be interested this time, but that doesn’t mean they won’t respond to you the next time you send them a story idea.

The key is to make yourself available as a source, always providing factual information. And be ready when that call or email eventually comes. After a reporter reaches out to you once and you provide great information, they are more likely to contact you again in the future.

Continue to fine-tune your PR efforts and eventually you will be rewarded. It will be a great feeling to see the name of your pet-sitting business in print or online—or to hear it on TV or the radio!

Need additional tips?
If you’re looking for an example of how to format a press release, PSI’s ebook, The Professional Pet Sitter’s Guide to Media Relations, covers this topic in more detail and includes a bonus section with 10 press-release templates you can use throughout the year. Also, PSI members have access to a variety of free press-release templates in the Members area of petsit.com.
### Certification Announcements

**Congratulations to these PSI members who have recently earned the designation of CPPS-Certified Professional Pet Sitter®:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Business Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julie Adelman</td>
<td>Jules Royalty Pet Care, San Diego, CA</td>
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<td>Zachariah Atteberry</td>
<td>Kindle Logic, Hannibal, MO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pamela Baldwin</td>
<td>Fuzzy Buddies Pet Services, LLC, Olney, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tricia Casper</td>
<td>Dog Training, Pasadena, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sierra Cole</td>
<td>Walk Stay Play Pet Care, Saskatoon, SK</td>
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<td>Kay Cooper</td>
<td>Cooper’s Critter Sitters, Lubbock, TX</td>
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<td>Alexis Day</td>
<td>Delighted Dog Training Academy, Columbus, OH</td>
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<td>Valerie Deschamps-Goren</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
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<td>Birdie Lobb-Blackwood</td>
<td>Birdie’s Pet Care, Edmonton, AB Canada</td>
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<td>Lorell Lopez</td>
<td>Cat &amp; Dog Nanny PR, Guaynabo, PR</td>
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<td>Ana Mango</td>
<td>Whisker Sitter Baton Rouge, LA</td>
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<td>Chris Massier</td>
<td>Pooches ‘n’ Whatnot, Naperville, IL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marla Mella</td>
<td>Marla’s Pet Services, Port Saint Lucie, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amy Munns</td>
<td>Leash 4 Lease, Inc, Poulsbo, WA</td>
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<td>Robert Nakamura</td>
<td>Dog Gone Fitness Co, Los Angeles, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lindsey Perriello</td>
<td>Lindsey’s Dog Walking &amp; In-Home Visits, LLC, Lower Burrell, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jennifer Walborn</td>
<td>Lap of Luxury Petsitting, Gulf Breeze, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brigid Wasson</td>
<td>Good Dogs Pet Sitting, Cloverdale, CA</td>
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<td>Amber Savage</td>
<td>Pawsome Adventures, Houston, TX</td>
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<td>Ashley Schneider</td>
<td>LC Pet Care, Nashotah, WI</td>
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<td>Carolyn Shen</td>
<td>PawPurr Pet Care, Kissimmee, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stacie Stark</td>
<td>My Critter Companion, LLC, Saukville, WI</td>
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<td>Aimee Therriault</td>
<td>Land and Sea Pet Care LLC, Montclair, VA</td>
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<td>Christine Townsend</td>
<td>Gwynedd Valley, PA</td>
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<td>Phyllis Turner</td>
<td>Wanderlust Elite Pet Services, Vero Beach, FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey Perriello</td>
<td>Lindsey’s Dog Walking &amp; In-Home Visits, LLC, Lower Burrell, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Walborn</td>
<td>Lap of Luxury Petsitting, Gulf Breeze, FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigid Wasson</td>
<td>Good Dogs Pet Sitting, Cloverdale, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna Willard</td>
<td>Go Away Pet Sitting, Manchester, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Schneider</td>
<td>P.E.T. Pet Sitter, Sha Tin, New Territories, Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Congratulations also to these members for renewing their CPPS® designation for an additional three years.**

- Ana Alvite
- Ani The Petsitting Nanny
- Julie Gajewski
- Fuzzy Friends Pet Care, LLC
- Brandon, FL
- Judy Arellano
- Paw Fanatic Pet Care
- Patti Harley
- Sanford, FL
- Kristin Huffman
- Safely Home Pet Sitting and Transport
- Columbus, OH
- Caroline Brockman
- Cara Care LLC
- Brenda Judson
- Chicago, IL
- Sweet Dreams Pet Services
- Hicksville, NY
- Melissa Dale
- WaggsnPurr
- Melissa Macias
- My Pet’s Friend, LLC
- Warrenton, VA
- Elizabeth Deering
- Simply Pawsome Pet Sitting and Services
- Christina Merrill
- Tortoise and Hare Pet Care, LLC
- Boulder, CO
- Stephanie Savy
- Steph’s Pet Sitting
- Karen Rhodes
- Pawsnclaws Services
- Steph’s Pet Sitting
- Midrand, Gauteng
- South Africa
- Jennifer Walborn
- Lap of Luxury Petsitting
- Stephanie Savy
- The Cat’s Pajamas
- Coon Rapids, MN
- Amy Munns
- Leash 4 Lease, Inc
- Christine Stutz
- Creature Comforts
- Beverly Friedel
- Affectionately Yours Pet Sitting Service
- Pat Teague
- Boca Raton, FL
- Hernando, MS
But we can offer ongoing education to fit your schedule and budget. Visit petsit.com/pro to learn more.

What happens if a staff sitter wrecks on the way to a pet-sitting assignment?

Contact Business Insurers of the Carolinas to learn how limited non-owned auto coverage can prevent a “crash and burn” situation for your business.
Where are you on the path to pet-sitting success?

**Aspiring Pet Sitter**
This stage is all about research! You haven’t started your business yet, but you are learning more about the industry, your local market and how you can put your PSI membership to work for you.

**Brand New Business**
You’ve officially decided to start your professional pet-sitting business! In this stage, you are taking the necessary steps to establish a strong foundation for a professional, legally operated service.

**Growing Business**
In this stage, you’re no longer a “newbie,” but your business still isn’t where you’d like it to be. Your focus is on gaining new clients and turning your business into a profitable, sustainable career choice.

**Established Business**
You’ve arrived! At this stage, you have a steady client base, profitable business and established presence in your community. You’re likely making important decisions about staying solo or using staff sitters.

**Industry Influencer**
At this stage, you’re considered an industry veteran. You’ve operated a successful business for many years, but now it’s time to give back by mentoring and sharing your knowledge with others.

PSI is here to help you at each stage of your professional pet-sitting journey.