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KEY MANAGEMENT

River City Rover LLC is implementing a new key management program and corresponding policies. Managing keys is one of the largest concerns for many pet sitting companies. There is a lot of administration and coordination involved with storing, safekeeping, identifying and managing keys. Just making sure the right key is in the care of the right pet sitter at the right time for optimum security and efficiency is a daily, if not hourly, concern.

Home security is of utmost importance to us and so we take the responsibility of key management very seriously. However, we prefer to spend less time on it so we can give most of our time and attention to your pets. We would love it if everything always went smoothly and there was no reason to plan for unexpected or emergency situations but our experience has shown that this business can be one unexpected situation after another. The health and happiness of your pets and the security of your home can depend on us being prepared, flexible and efficient. We hope that our new key management options will help us be all of those things so we can provide the best possible service to you.

After much thought and in an effort to provide the best solutions to all of you we are offering three different options so that you can select the one that works best for your particular situation. It has taken a while to develop this program because it is very difficult to come up with something that will work for everyone given the diversity of our clientele. A lot of time and thought has gone into the development of these options. We have done a lot of research and are implementing this based both on industry best practices and our personal experiences over the last two years. With all that said we know that these options may not work for everyone or there may be special circumstances that will lend themselves to different solutions. For example, if someone is always home to let us in then we do not need any keys at all! Wonderful! Please do let us know if you would like to discuss your situation with us.

OPTIONS

River City Rover LLC is offering the following three key management options to our clients. We ask you to please consider them carefully, select the one that works best for you and notify us of your choice. We have some additional information labeled Option 4. These are things we never did or no longer do that you should be aware of.

- Option 1 – Convenient Key Program
- Option 2 – Lock Box Program
- Option 3 – Pick Up and Drop Off
- Option 4 – Not An Option

Option 1 – Convenient Key Program

If we currently have a copy of your key so that we can easily provide “as needed” future pet care or emergency pet care then you are already using the Convenient Key program. ***However, we are making a change to this program by requesting two working copies of your key or requesting your permission to make one additional copy of your key.*** One will be for the use of the pet care professional who is doing your visits and the other will be secured at the office for backup or emergency situations. Keys that are stored at our location are coded for identification. No name or address or pets name are stored with the keys. Keys that are in possession of a pet sitter are also coded for identification. Your name and address are not on the key identification.

This key management practice along with the request for two keys is documented and endorsed by Pet Sitter International (PSI) President, Patti Moran. It is described in her book *Pet Sitting for Profit* which was first published in 1987 is often described as the “bible of pet sitting.” This program was also recently described in the August 2009 edition of “The Scoop” the PSI newsletter for professional pet sitters. We will go into more detail in the Frequently Asked Questions section about the need for two keys. If we currently keep a copy of your key on file and you would like us to continue to do so, we request your permission to make one extra copy of any duplicatable keys. Please get in touch with us to discuss your particular situation if you do NOT want us to make an extra copy of your key.

Many of the largest and most recognized professional pet care companies use this key management program. Please feel free to contact us for a list of other pet care companies that offer this kind of program.

Option 2 – Lock Box Program

The Lock Box program includes the ongoing use of a lock box for on-site key security and storage. The lock box and your keys are completely under your control and your keys never leave your premises. Although we have a recommended generic code for our use, you can change the lock box code at your convenience. Your keys can always be available to us whenever you need our services. In addition, you can use your lockbox to provide keys to other service providers such as house cleaners, contractors, etc.

River City Rover LLC can provide a lock box for a \$20 deposit or the client can purchase their own. The lockbox MUST be secured in a protected and well-lit area so the pet sitter is able to safely pick up and deposit the keys. We will also ask that you leave two keys in the lock box for us. We will go into more detail in the Frequently Asked Questions section about the need for two keys. If you would like to get a lock box from us, let us know and we will get you set up as quickly as we can.

Many Realtors and professional home cleaning services use lock boxes for key management and more and more pet care companies are also using lock boxes. Please feel free to contact us for a list of other pet care companies that prefer or exclusively use lock boxes to access client’s keys.

Option 3 – Pick Up and Drop Off

If you are not comfortable using a lock box or providing two copies of your key for us to keep on file we still want to provide you with an option you can be comfortable with. As scheduling permits we can pick up and drop off keys as needed. If we must make a special trip for the primary purpose of picking up or dropping off a key we will charge \$10.00 per trip. Even under these circumstances we would like to have two keys or have permission to make an extra key if needed. We will return both keys to you when we drop the keys off. We will go into more detail in the Frequently Asked Questions section about the need for two keys.

Option 4 – Not an Option

We really hope that the three options offered above will satisfy most every need and situation. With the explanations of these three options there are two things that we have never been particularly comfortable and never did or will no longer do. Due to situations in the news or to circumstances we ourselves have been involved in over the last year we will no longer handle keys in the following ways:

-- We will no longer use unsecured, hidden keys.

If you want to leave a hidden key, please consider using a secure lock box instead. Keys that are left in mailboxes or under mats or pots pose a security risk for your home, but even more importantly they create a dangerous situation for our pet sitters and your pets.

-- We do not leave/lock keys in your in home at the end of a pet sitting visit.

Over the last year clients have been delayed getting home for any number of reasons (weather, traffic, accidents, illness, delayed flights, etc.) Every time we get one of those calls asking us if we can please do an extra visit I am glad that we didn't leave the client's key in their home where we could no longer get to it. I have heard stories of 9/11 from pet sitters who were working during that time. Airports were shut down, flights were cancelled for days, cell phones didn't work and they had no contact from their clients. They were able to keep on caring for their client's pets through it all. We want to be able to provide you with peace of mind that we will care for your pets even if something beyond your control keeps you from arriving home on time.

A Note About Security Systems:

Although we can keep your security code on file, we recommend that a separate code be entered into your security system for us to use while providing care for your pets. We have a generic code that we prefer. It is easy for us to remember and your usual code will never need to be written down, stored or even known by us.

Frequently Asked Questions

Okay, so I made it to the FAQ and I'm beside myself with curiosity. Why do you require two copies of my house key?

The most basic explanation is that we require two copies of your house key so that we can give one to your pet sitter to use during the duration of his/her assignment and we

can keep one in the office as a backup or in case of emergency. We do this so that if something happened to your pet sitter (such as illness, accident, traffic delays, etc.) we could still send someone to your home to care for your pets.

Although a rare occurrence, we have locked ourselves out of a house once or twice. Having an extra key at the office can be critical for us to be able to provide uninterrupted care for your pet and the other pets that are waiting for us.

I'm still curious, can you give me some other examples of why you would need a backup key?

Yes, as owner of the company, one of my jobs is to ensure that everything runs smoothly, that we accommodate our client's needs to the best of our ability and that clients are extremely satisfied with our services. Having a backup key allows me to do this in two ways.

First, it gives me the ability to perform random spot checks. It is my job to ensure my employees are doing all the things I have trained them to do at each and every visit. Having a key in the office allows me to check their work at any time and give feedback for continuous improvement.

Secondly, having a backup key in the office gives me the ability to handle all kinds of situations that we would not be able to manage without it. The pet sitters have full schedules and often have pets waiting on them for potty breaks, food and water and sometimes medication. It is important that they stay on schedule. However, we do not want to leave a pet or a situation that requires additional time or attention. This is where I come in. I provide support to the pet sitters in these situations. I can come and handle a situation that would delay them so they can proceed to other pets that are waiting for them. However, if we don't have access to the home (ie a backup key) I cannot help them.

Here is a just a small list of situations that have happened to us or other pet sitters we network with where a backup key would have been very helpful.

- ❑ Pet is sick and should not be left alone. Someone needs to take pet to vet or stay with pet until parents can come home. Designated pet sitter needs to go to next visits.
- ❑ Pet sitter cannot locate a cat in the home. Clients are concerned. They ask us not to leave until we find the missing cat inside the house. Pet sitter has other pets waiting and needs to go to next visit.
- ❑ Client is out of pet food. Someone needs to purchase food and deliver to home.
- ❑ Dog has completely disassembled their crate and is loose in the house. Someone needs to reassemble the crate and secure the doggy. Pet sitter has other pets waiting and needs to go to next visit.
- ❑ Client calls to say that something might be wrong at their home (curling iron is on, windows are open, etc.) Can we go to the house and check it out? It may be after pet sitting hours or designated pet sitter may be on another visit and is unable to accommodate the request.
- ❑ Client calls to say a friend/neighbor called and thinks something is wrong at their house (security or fire alarm is going off, fire alarm battery is low and beeping loudly, a balcony or patio door is open.) Can we go to the house and check it out? It may be after pet sitting hours or designated pet sitter may be on another visit and is unable to accommodate the request.

- ❑ Client calls and is delayed at work. Can we fit in an unscheduled visit?
Designated pet sitter is fully booked and cannot do the visit.
- ❑ It is raining heavily. (i.e. Hurricane Gaston, Isabel) pets are in the basement and clients are scared of flooding. Can someone go by and get the pets?
- ❑ House has been burglarized. Pet sitter must stay at the home until police come and home is secured. Pet sitter has other pets to visit. Someone else must do those visits.

Wow! Never thought of all that, but why do you require two copies of my key in the lock box?

In the event that a key is lost or a pet sitter locks themselves out of the home, having two keys ensures the pet sitter will have immediate access to a backup key so they can provide uninterrupted care for your pet and the other pets that are waiting for them.

What precautions do you take to ensure my keys are safe with River City Rover?

All employees are screened prior to employment and are bonded and insured. Your keys are identified by a code that does not contain your name or address. Your name and the contents of your home always remain confidential.