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# A Canine Caring Conundrum



Here's a tricky hypothetical question for pet lovers.

A friend is taking the trip of lifetime to Greece and Italy to meet up with relatives and old friends and asks you to take care of her dog, Marvin, her loved Jack Russell Terrier. You gladly offer, since you like the dog too and are happy to help out with a favour. She's going to be away overseas for just on a month and not boarding Marvin in a kennel will save her money. Marvin will be in a home environment and will likely be less stressed and probably more comfortable. It's a win-win situation, as you get to look after a little mate and she's able to take time out, leaving him in the best of care.

Your friend drops Marvin off, bids a teary farewell and leaves his food, favourite toys, bedding and a list of instructions for his care. After a few hours, Marvin settles in nicely and has even staked out a claim for the easy chair in the corner. You look at your watch and know your friend is flying the friendly skies and is probably watching in-flight movies, six hours into her long flight.

The postman makes his usual call to your home and has a large package for you to sign for. As normal you open the door to accept and sign for the delivery. What happens next is unexpected—Marvin races through the open front door and bolts down the street. Panicked, you quickly usher away the postie and grabbing a lead race after Marvin. In a cruel and gut-wrenching few minutes, the worst happens. Marvin dashes across the street and is struck by an oncoming car. The driver stops and helps you as you cradle this very badly injured dog into the car. The driver is going to drive you to the vet, once you figure out where the nearest practice is. After what seems like hours, but is in fact only about 20 minutes, you arrive at the vet. Marvin is immediately admitted and you wait, hoping that it's only a minor injury.

After a seemingly long wait, a grey-faced vet emerges from a back room and delivers bad news; very, very bad news. Marvin has passed away on the operating table. He couldn't be saved as his internal injuries were too severe.

Not a nice scenario, is it? But here's where it gets very tricky...

*Do you wait until you know your friend is at her destination and immediately phone and tell her the horrible news?*

*Or do you decide that this unfortunate incident and the awful news is so bad that it will spoil her holiday and you'll wait until she's back home before telling her?*

Most people reading this article would be pet lovers and owners, so perhaps the real question is, "If I was the travelling friend, would I want to know as soon as possible?" The vast majority of my pet-loving friends all said they would want to

know—if not immediately, then at least well before returning home. But some pet people polled said that they would be too upset to enjoy their holiday and wouldn't want to know until they returned home.

There's also the murky moral question of whether lies would then be tolerated and told. To what extent would either party be okay about not telling the truth or having the truth told. It's one thing to not let on about a broken toe so as not to worry your friend but to reply to emails about how much fun Marvin is having is really a tough issue. "Marvin's had such a great time that he's worn out and is sleeping like the dead," or "Marvin can't come to the phone now because I like to let sleeping dogs die, I mean lie." Perhaps even this porker: "Marvin's missing you so much and he's dying to see you back home."

It's a very emotive issue, sparking some lively dinner party debate with even non-pet people weighing into the discussions. There's another issue that needs to be considered and that involves what happens with the care, storage or disposal of Marvin's body. I know exactly what I want to do with my dog's remains, but would anyone else?

You may wish to have your pet cremated, either having the ashes disposed of or keeping them for scattering at a later time in a special place. Perhaps you really want your pet to be buried under that gorgeous Magnolia tree on your Aunt Bessie's farm.

During my unofficial polling of pet-loving and non-pet-owning friends, a common suggestion was always laid on the table—if you're leaving your pet in the hands of a carer, you should tell them your wishes in the unlikely event of the worst case scenario. And as a friend put in the responsibility of caring for a pet, you should be very clear as to what your travelling friend would expect you to do—in the absolute worst case or if injury is incurred—even a broken toe.



## Green Health tip

Many naturopaths suggest that natural, unprocessed, locally harvested honey is beneficial to allergy sufferers. Honey contains bits and pieces of pollen and honey, and as an immune system booster it is quite powerful. It may seem odd that straight exposure to pollen often triggers allergies but that exposure to pollen in the honey usually has the opposite effect. In honey the allergens are delivered in small, manageable doses and the effect over time is very much like that from undergoing a whole series of allergy immunology injections. Honey's much cheaper and more pleasant. Perhaps your itchy pooch might benefit from a small daily dose.