

# Feeling a bit lonely? Don't Fret Pet

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PEOPLE often say the best thing about grandchildren is that you can spoil them and send them home afterwards.

If you don't have any grandchildren to pamper, you might consider lavishing your affection on an animal under similar conditions: the pet is a temporary guest in your house and, unlike grandchildren, doesn't answer back.

An increasing number of retirees are taking on animal-minding through Don't Fret Pet, a specialised dog boarding service which began operating in 1993.

The service provides a caring alternative to boarding kennels, matching dogs with families similar to their own who will take them into their homes and give them the TLC they need when their regular humans are away.

While Don't Fret Pet minders are paid a daily allowance, love of dogs is the main reason they participate in the service.

Many carers are retirees who love dogs and have had dogs in the past, but do not want to have another because they feel it is too late in life for them to take on a commitment or they want to be free to visit families without the tie of an animal to restrict their comings and goings.

But having a dog come to stay temporarily provides them with good company, and often dogs get on so well with their carers that they keep going back whenever a holiday looms.

Mary Snodgrass minded her first dog in September, 1995.

Although she had had her own dogs in the past, the memory of too many painful

goodbyes had made her wary of making another long-term commitment. But the experience of minding dogs has changed her attitude, and Mary has adopted one of her temporary guests, a miniature foxie call Bidy, who was looking for a home.

Carers indicate the size and type of dog they would like to mind and whether or not it would be welcome indoors.

Sometimes owners have special requirements for the dogs being cared for.

One visiting chihuahua had to be given cups of tea during the day; another had to be taken to its owner's wedding.

But generally owners are just happy to have their dog cared for in a loving, homely environment.

If you are interested in becoming a carer, contact Jenny on 1300 30 70 21.