



EVALUATION GUIDE

App-Based & Drop-In Care Evaluation Guide

A toolkit to help you evaluate app-based and independent drop-in care providers and make more informed decisions about your **silly goose**'s on-demand care.





Your dog needs a midday walk and you're stuck in a meeting. Someone to pop in while you're traveling. A familiar face who can handle the afternoon routine when life gets hectic. **App-based platforms and drop-in services were built for exactly these moments, and millions of dog parents rely on them.**

The convenience is real. But so is the gap between what the platform shows you and what you actually need to know. Most providers are independent contractors, and the platforms themselves vary widely in how they screen, what they cover, and what happens when something goes wrong. **This guide is here to help you close that gap**, so you can find someone you trust and feel good about the care your silly goose is getting.



UNDERSTANDING THE PLATFORM

What screening or background check process does the platform or business use for its care providers?

Many platforms advertise “background checks” but the depth and scope vary significantly. Reach out to confirm what is actually checked.

Are the care providers employees of the platform, or independent contractors?

This matters for liability. If something goes wrong, who is responsible? Review the platform’s terms of service.

Does the platform offer any insurance or guarantee?

Some platforms provide limited coverage, but it often has exclusions. Understand what is and isn’t covered.

How does the platform handle disputes, incidents, or complaints?

Can you see verified reviews from other dog parents? Are negative reviews visible?

Does the platform require providers to pass any pet care training or certification? If so, which ones?



EVALUATING THE INDIVIDUAL PROVIDER

What experience do they have with dogs, and specifically with your dog’s breed, size, or temperament?

Do they have pet first aid or CPR training?

Do they have any professional certifications relevant to pet sitting?

For example: Fear Free Pet Sitter Certification Program, Certified Professional Pet Sitter via Pet Sitters International, etc.

Will they meet your dog before the first booking?

A meet-and-greet is essential. Observe how the provider interacts with your dog and how your dog responds.

How many other dogs will they be caring for at the same time as yours?

For drop-in visits and walks, some providers book multiple dogs back-to-back or simultaneously.

Will other clients’ dogs be present with your dog on walks or during check-ins?

Do they have references you can contact outside of the platform?

Are they comfortable handling your dog’s needs (medications, anxiety, dietary restrictions, reactivity)?



A note on certifications: In an industry with little to no regulatory requirements, certifications mean something. They reflect a provider who chose to pursue formal training and professional standards when nobody required them to. But they’re not a performance guarantee. Some certified providers will fall short; some uncertified providers will exceed your expectations. **Use certifications as one input in your evaluation, but not as the single deciding factor.**



YOUR DOG'S EXPERIENCE

For drop-in visits: How long will the provider actually be in your home? What will they do during the visit?

Understand the difference between a 30-minute visit that's a bathroom break vs. genuine engagement and enrichment.

For dog walking: Where will they walk your dog? Will your dog be walked alone or with other dogs?

For in-home sitting: Will the provider stay overnight, or just visit periodically?

We recommend reviewing our Pet Sitter Evaluation Guide for additional questions and guidance.

How will they ensure your dog doesn't escape your home or yard?

Discuss door protocols, gate security, and leash-on/leash-off policies.

Will they follow your dog's normal feeding schedule, exercise routine, and house rules?



SAFETY, COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY

Will they send photos, videos, or check-in messages during each visit?

How and when will they notify you if something goes wrong; an injury, illness, escape, or behavioral issue?

Clarify expectations: Do you want a call immediately, or is a text acceptable? What is their threshold for notifying you?

Do they know the location of your nearest emergency vet?

Will they have access to your dog's medical records and emergency vet contact information?

If the provider needs to cancel last-minute, what is the backup plan?

Are there cameras in your home you'll use to monitor visits? If so, have you communicated this to the provider?

Will they share if a dog has died or been seriously injured in their care?

How did they handle the situation and communication with the owners?



BEFORE THE FIRST BOOKING

- **Leave a written list of your dog's daily routine, medications, vet information, and emergency contacts.**

Are certain rooms or treats off limits? Do you expect 24/7 GPS collar usage? How long can your pet be left alone?

Document everything. **If you need a template, check out our ['Silly Goose Care Manual'](#) to start making your own.**

- **If your dog has a GPS collar, ensure it is charged and the provider knows how to use it. Stress they should not remove the collar unless it needs to be charged.**
- **Walk through your home with the provider: show them where food, leashes, waste bags, first aid supplies, and keys are located.**
- **Discuss any off-limits areas and escape risks (doors that don't latch, fence gaps, etc.).**
- **Confirm in writing when you expect updates and how you want to be contacted.**
- **If your dogs are staying with a sitter, let your neighbors know who will be caring for your dog and share the provider's contact information.**



Remember: This guide is not a checklist. It's a tool. Not every question will apply to every situation. Focus on the factors most important to you and your silly goose.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

*Asking questions is an act of love. This guide exists to help you ask the ones that matter most for the care of your **silly goose**.*

ABOUT ROLAND'S SILLY GOOSE CREW

Roland's Silly Goose Crew is an Austin, Texas 501c3 nonprofit founded after our dog Roland was killed at a local dog daycare in October 2022. He escaped through an unsecured door and was hit by a car. There were no consequences, no required reporting, and no required proactive disclosures to other families.

We started RSGC so no other family would face what we did without information, resources, or recourse. Through free evaluation guides, community partnerships, and legislative advocacy, we're working to bring transparency and accountability to the dog care industry.

Support Our Mission

Every guide we create and distribute is free. Your tax-deductible donation helps us reach more families, develop new resources, and advocate for stronger protections for dogs in Texas.

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