

# FACTSHEET

## Animal Care

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Animal and  
Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

January 1999

## Traveling by Air With Your Pet

Dogs, cats, and most other warmblooded animals transported by air are protected by the Animal Welfare Act. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) enforces this law.

APHIS' shipping regulations help assure that animals are treated humanely by airlines as well as animal dealers, exhibitors, and research laboratories. Pet exhibitors, owners, and other shippers also are affected by regulations established to protect the well-being and safety of animals in transit.

### Airline Procedures

Airlines transport animals in the cargo compartment of the plane, but some airlines allow passengers to transport small animals in the cabin as carryon luggage. The pet must be placed in a kennel that is comfortable yet small enough to fit under the passenger's seat. Carryon pets are not protected by the Animal Welfare Act. For specific airline requirements, contact the airline.

### APHIS Requirements

#### Age

Dogs and cats must be at least 8 weeks old and must have been weaned before traveling with the airlines.

#### Kennels

Kennels must meet minimum standards for size, strength, sanitation, and ventilation.

**Size and strength**—Kennels must be enclosed and allow room for the animal to stand, sit, breathe, and rest comfortably. They must be easy to open, strong enough to withstand the stress of shipping, and free of objects that could injure the animal.

**Sanitation**—Kennels must have a solid, leak-proof floor that is covered with litter or absorbent lining. Wire or other ventilated subfloors are generally allowed; pegboard flooring is prohibited. This provides the maximum cleanliness for the animal in travel.

**Ventilation**—Kennels must be well ventilated with openings that make up at least 14 percent of the total wall space. At least one-third of the openings must be located in the top half of the kennel. Kennels also must have rims to prevent ventilation openings from being blocked by other shipments. These rims—



usually placed on the sides of the kennel—must provide at least three-quarters of an inch clearance.

**Grips and markings**—Kennels must have grips or handles for lifting to prevent cargo workers from being bitten. Kennels also must be labeled “live animals” or “wild animals” on the top and one side with directional arrows indicating position of the kennel. Lettering must be at least 1 inch high.

**Animals per kennel**—Each species must have its own kennel with the exception of compatible personal pets of similar size. Maximum numbers include 2 puppies or kittens less than 6 months old and 20 pounds each, 15 guinea pigs or rabbits, and 50 hamsters.

### **Feeding and Watering**

Instructions for feeding, watering, and administering medication to the animal over a 24-hour period must be attached to the kennel. The 24-hour schedule will assist the airline in providing care for animals that are diverted from their scheduled destination. The shipper is required to document that the animal was given food and water within 4 hours of transport, and the certification must include the time and date of feeding.

Food and water dishes must be securely attached and be accessible without opening the kennel. Food and water must be provided to puppies and kittens every 12 hours if they are less than 16 weeks old. Mature animals must be fed every 24 hours and given water every 12 hours.

### **Health Certification**

Airlines and State health officials generally require health certificates for all animals transported by air. Health certificates must be issued by a licensed veterinarian who examined the animal within 10 days of transport. Dealers, exhibitors, and others regulated under the Animal Welfare Act must provide a health certificate for each dog, cat, or nonhuman primate shipped.

## **Trips Outside the Continental United States**

Foreign countries and Hawaii have quarantine or health requirements for arriving pets. For information about Hawaii’s requirements, write to:

Division of Animal Industry  
Animal Quarantine Branch  
99–951 Halawa Valley Street  
Aiea, HI 96701–3294  
(808) 483–7151 or (808) 483–7100

For information about international requirements, contact the appropriate embassy or consulate at least 4 weeks before the trip.

Airlines or a full-service travel agency can provide additional information about animal care requirements for international flights.

For more information about the Animal Welfare Act, write to:

Animal Care  
APHIS, USDA  
4700 River Road, Unit 84  
Riverdale, MD 20737  
Telephone: (301) 734–7833  
E-mail: [ace@usda.gov](mailto:ace@usda.gov)  
Web page: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ac>

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