

## What you should know about traveling with your pet

### Planning and Preparation

Planning and preparation are necessary when traveling with family pets. Consider whether your pet is comfortable when traveling. Some animals, like some people, function better in familiar surroundings. A car-sick animal can make a trip miserable for everyone. Some ill or physically impaired dogs and cats cannot withstand the rigors of travel. If this is the case, discuss options such as using a reliable pet-sitter or a clean, well-managed boarding facility with your veterinarian.

If you will be staying with friends along the way, be considerate. Find out in advance if the pet is welcome. The same goes for hotels, motels, parks, and campgrounds. Always check whether pets are allowed or kennel facilities are available. If the pet must be left alone in a hotel room, place a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door and inform the maid and the front desk. Consider bringing along a portable kennel for use in hotel rooms or the homes of friends or relatives who are not comfortable with your pet loose when no one is home.

A few general tips apply whether you travel by car or plane. Be sure your pet is properly identified with a current tag and/or a microchip. Grooming (bathing, combing, trimming nails) before a trip, plus having its favorite food, toy(s), and dishes available will make your pet more comfortable. Have both proof of rabies vaccination and a current health certificate with you when crossing state or international borders.

Before undertaking any trip, consult your veterinarian to be sure that all required vaccinations are up-to-date and to receive a health certificate within ten days of travel.

### Travel by Air

Air travel is of most concern to pet owners. The airlines sometimes update their regulations on pet travel including restrictions on breeds and size. Check with your airline well in advance for their current regulations. Many of the major airlines now allow cats and dogs under 15 pounds to travel in pet-designed carry-on luggage that will fit under the seat. Also, new, smaller air travel services such as Companion Air ([www.companionair.com](http://www.companionair.com)) allow pets and their people to travel in the cabin together.

Federal regulations require that pets be at least 8 weeks old and weaned at least 5 days before flying. Always try to book a nonstop, midweek flight and avoid plane changes whenever possible. During warm weather periods, choose early morning or late evening flights. In colder months, choose midday flights. The Federal Animal Welfare Regulations prohibit airlines from accepting dogs and cats for shipment if the airline cannot prevent exposure of the animal to temperatures less than 45 degrees F for more than 45 minutes while transferring the dog or cat between the terminal and the plane. However, this prohibition is waived if a veterinarian provides an acclimation certificate stating that the dog or cat can be exposed to lower temperatures. Your veterinarian cannot give a certificate allowing exposures to temperatures above 85 degrees F for more than 45 minutes.

Reconfirm your flight arrangements the day before you leave to ensure there have been no unexpected flight changes. Arrive at the airport early, exercise your pet, personally place it in its crate, and pick up the animal promptly upon arrival at your destination. When boarding the plane, let the flight attendant know that your pet is in the cargo hold.



Transport crates, available from most airlines or pet shops, must:

- Be large enough to allow the animal to stand (without touching the top of the cage), turn around, and lie down.
- Be strong and free of interior protrusions, with handle or grips.
- Have a leak proof bottom that is covered with plenty of absorbent material.
- Be appropriately and clearly labeled. Include your name, home address, home phone number, and destination contact information, as well as a designation of "Live Animals," with arrows indicating the crate's upright position. (In addition, carry your pet's photo and health information with you on the plane for easy identification in the event the cage label is lost.)
- Be ventilated on opposite sides with exterior rims and knobs so that airflow is not impeded.

Before leaving on your trip, take the time to accustom your pet to the crate in which he will be traveling.

Ask your veterinarian for specific feeding instructions. For your pet's comfort, air travel on an almost empty stomach is usually recommended. The age and size of your pet, time and distance of the flight, and your pet's regular dietary routine will be considered when feeding recommendations are made. It is recommended that you not give tranquilizers to your pet when traveling by air.

## Travel by Car

If your pet is not accustomed to car travel, take it for a few short rides before your trip so it will feel confident that a car outing does not necessarily mean a trip to the veterinarian or an unpleasant destination. Cats should always be confined to a cage or in a cat carrier to allow them to feel secure and prevent them from crawling under your feet while you are driving.

A dog that must ride in a truck bed should be confined in a protective kennel that is fastened to the truck bed. Dogs riding in a car should not ride in the passenger seat if it is equipped with an airbag. Some car companies are now providing optional "Pet Lovers Packages" with their new vehicles that include items such as pet tethers, harnesses, and cushions. These car companies realize that your dog should be in a secure harness or sturdy carrier to avoid injury should you make a sudden turn or stop. Pet harnesses attach to the seatbelt and safely keep your dog in one place. Accustom your dog to a seatbelt harness by attaching a leash and taking your dog for short walks while wearing it. Offer your dog a treat and praise at the end of the walk to associate a positive experience with wearing the harness.

Stick to your regular feeding routine and give the main meal at the end of the day or when you reach your destination. Feeding dry food will be more convenient, assuming your pet readily consumes it. Dispose of unused canned food unless it can be refrigerated. Take along a plastic jug of cold water in case other reliable water sources are not available. Give small portions of food and water and plan to stop every two hours for exercise. Remember to include a leash with your pet's traveling supplies. If your dog has a problem with carsickness, your veterinarian can prescribe medication that will help the dog feel comfortable during a long car trip.

Pets should not be allowed to ride with their heads outside car windows. Particles of dirt or other debris can enter the eyes, ears, and nose, causing injury or infection. If you must leave your pet in a parked car, don't leave him for a long period of time and be sure to lock all doors, park in a shady area, and open windows wide enough to provide ventilation without enabling your pet to jump out or get its head caught. Be aware of weather conditions. You should never leave your pet in a parked car when the temperature and/or humidity are high or when temperatures are near or below freezing.

## Travel by Bus or Train

Most states prohibit animals from riding on buses and similar regulations restrict travel on trains. Exceptions are made for guide and service dogs accompanying blind and disabled persons. Consult your local carriers in advance for information.

## Camping With Pets

Travel to country settings with your pet presents its own challenges. Skunks, raccoons, porcupines, snakes, and other wildlife can bite or otherwise injure your pet. Keep your pet within sight and on a leash. Be considerate of other campers. Be sure to ask your veterinarian about flea, tick and heartworm prevention before you leave.

## Additional Pet Travel and Health Tips

- When traveling by car, pack a simple pet first-aid kit that includes assorted bandages, antiseptic cream, an antidiarrheal medication that is safe for pets (ask your veterinarian to suggest a product), gauze squares, and the phone numbers of your veterinarian, a national poison control hotline, and a 24-hour emergency veterinary hospital
- In addition to a standard identification tag (which should be labeled with your name, home address and phone number), your pet's collar should include a travel tag with information on where you are staying while away from home. Should your pet become lost, this will allow you to be contacted locally.
- Perform a daily "health check" on your pet when away from home. In unfamiliar surroundings, your pet's appetite, energy, and disposition may change. Watch for unusual discharges from the nose and eyes, excessive scratching or biting of any body part, abnormal elimination, or excessive water consumption. Visit a local veterinarian if you are concerned about any physical or behavioral changes.

***For more information and helpful tips on traveling with your pet***

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/reports/>

[www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/petravel.html](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/petravel.html)

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