



## **Travel With Pets**

Have you ever wanted to take your pet on vacation but you weren't sure how to make it happen? It can take some advance planning to bring your dog or cat with you and even more if you have an exotic pet such as a snake or bird.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), more than 53 % of people take their pets with them on vacation. It's not easy to do so because two of the four most common modes of transportation, trains and buses, prohibit pets. That means your pet will most likely be travelling with you in the family car or be in the pet cargo section on an airline. Either way there are a few precautions you can take to make the travel easier on your pet.

For pet owners preparing to travel by plane or car a bit of preparation and time will prevent future heartaches and frustrations on the trip. First, make sure that your pet has proper identification. This can be something as simple as an ID tag or GPS unit on his collar, but a more permanent solution would be the use of an implantable microchip.

Next, make sure you have copies of vaccination records and needed medications easily accessible during the trip. And finally, do your homework. Most airlines and destinations require a health certificate for your pet. This document must be dated within 10 days of the start of your travels. If you are travelling internationally your pet will require an International Health Certificate. Each country has specific requirements. It is your responsibility to find out the specific requirements of your destination country. You can look these up on the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service website <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/pet-travel>. An International health certificate must be signed by a veterinarian who is USDA certified. Then you must get the form to the APHIS veterinarian in New York and pay a fee to APHIS for their veterinarian to sign off on the form.

For pets that will be flying with their owners, good communication with the airlines is a must. In all cases, your four legged friend needs to be over 8 weeks old and weaned for at least 5 days. Most airlines will require the above mentioned health certificate and all recommend arriving at the airport early to insure the smooth check-in of your pet. Kennels that will be checked into the cargo area must be non-collapsible, large enough to allow the pet to stand and have a leak-proof bottom covered with absorbent material. Be sure to check the weather at home and at your destination. Some specific breeds and individual pets may not do well, especially during the warmer temperatures of summer. Airlines may refuse to transport pets if the temperature exceeds 85 degrees in the cargo hold or is less than 45 degrees anywhere along the itinerary. Some airlines require a

veterinarian's statement that the pet is acclimated to cold weather if the temperature drops below 45 degrees.

If you have a small dog or cat you may be allowed to travel with your pet in the cabin area, usually in a carrier. The airlines have strict guidelines about the size of the carrier and pet so they can be stowed under your seat. Service pets are allowed on planes with their owners and do not have to be in carriers.

I can tell you that on a flight to Saint Thomas I witnessed a lovely Lhasa Apso sprawled in the aisle snoozing during the majority of the trip. He must have been a frequent flyer because flight attendants just maneuvered around him and didn't seem to mind. On a flight home from San Francisco a rescue and wildlife education organization was transporting an orphaned baby kangaroo. It weighed about 30lbs and was snuggled into its "pouch" a big fleecy sheepskin bag on its caretakers lap. All these exceptions have to be negotiated with the airline.

Many owners are very worried about the safety of their pets in flight and during boarding procedures. According to the website, [www.dryfur.com](http://www.dryfur.com), the majority of accidents and injuries that happen to pets are the result of poor quality carriers or kennels that are missing pieces. Again, a few moments of preparation by the owner can avoid a loss or death of their pet. And for those owners who have contemplated sedation for their pets, the answer is a resounding NO! The AVMA, and the American Humane Association both agree emphatically that sedation during flight is a risk pet owners should not take.

Traveling by car may be less complex than air travel, but due to the longer time frames, owners need to plan rest stops and exercise times for their animal companions. The AVMA recommends that you keep a jug of fresh water in the car to avoid times when reliable water sources may not be available. Pets will travel better with small amounts of food and water in their system frequently rather than allowing the pet to eat his or her normal ration. Birds should always be in their cages lest they fly out the window. Cats should be kept in carriers or cages during travel to avoid potential accidents if the pet gets "underfoot" of the driver.

Don't do what my client told me he did a long time ago. He let his cat Freelicks lounge on the dashboard every summer as he cruised up to his summer cottage in Canada. He said she never budged when he rolled down the window to pay the tolls.

When you reach your destination, be sure that you are aware of pet-friendly hotels and campsites in the area. Also, veterinary and animal experts recommend owners to be "considerate" and have a kennel or crate available. There are many sites online that can help you find lodging that allow pets. At [www.petswelcome.com](http://www.petswelcome.com), over 25,000 hotels and other locations that allow pets are listed. Veterinarians recommend the year round application of a topical flea and tick preventative to help avoid bringing home any unwanted guests.

Just like their owners, many pets are individuals and won't accept the changes that travel brings to their lives. For these pets, having the name of a good local boarding kennel or reliable pet sitter is probably a smarter idea. Online resources include the American Boarding Kennel Association ([www.abka.com](http://www.abka.com)) and the National Association of

Professional Pet Sitters ([www.petsitters.org](http://www.petsitters.org)). As always, your family veterinarian likely has information about local facilities that he or she trusts with the care of your pet.

So, as the busy travel season gets underway, remember that many problems and potential injuries can easily be avoided with a little bit of preparation and homework. Be sure and talk with your veterinarian about your pet's special travel needs and what he or she recommends for traveling.

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