SAFE TRAVELS

In the U.S., millions of pets and animals travel by air each year.[1] Yet air travel for pets, just like for many of us, can be stressful. Imagine a plane trip from your pet's point of view—they are encountering new smells, people they don't know and a certain lack of freedom. To make your pet's air travel experience as smooth and comfortable as possible, we've compiled some helpful tips on the dos and don'ts of flying with your pet.

DO'S

- Acquire a Health Certificate and proof of a rabies vaccination from your veterinarian for your pet at least ten days before flying.[1, 2] Each state and country has their own requirements for pets traveling into their jurisdiction. Be sure to check the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) website for U.S. requirements and with your destination country's embassy for international requirements.[2]
- Use the correct carrier. For most airlines a soft-carrier that is small enough to fit underneath the seat in front of you is good for carry-on pets. For pets traveling as checked baggage or cargo, hard-sided carriers should be used. Always check with your airline for specific size allowances.
- Understand that your carry-on pet counts as one of your pieces of carry-on luggage.
- Label your kennel with your pet's name along with your name, phone number and address. Include a telephone number and address of a person at your arrival destination in case they have to be contacted about your pet; this is especially important when shipping pets via cargo.[3]
- Inquire at the airport information desk about special pet relief areas that may be available.[3]

DON'TS

- Forget to offer your pet food and water within four hours of your check-in with the airline as the USDA requires. Make sure that your pet is not overfed to avoid an upset stomach! Upon check-in, the airline will ask that you certify the time of your pet's last offering of food and water.[3]
- Take your pet out of the kennel inside the airport terminal building or during a flight unless specifically instructed by airport personnel. Keeping your pet contained will help you to stay within airport regulations and show courtesy to other passengers.[3]
- Assume that all airlines permit pets. Many airlines have age, health and even breed limitations.[4, 5] Call your airline and confirm.
- Expect that your pet will automatically have a spot on the plane. Airlines allow a limited number of animals on different planes and flights, so be sure to alert the airline of your pet's presence when booking your ticket.[4, 6]
- Assume that assistance animals have the same requirements as other pets traveling by air. Many times service animals can travel for free and are usually not required to travel in a kennel.[4, 7] Also, a Health Certificate may not be required for service animals used by passengers with disabilities.

WEBSITES

Pet-Friendly Airports in the U.S.
- www.petfriendlytravel.com/airports

Pet-Friendly Airlines/Movers
- www.AirAnimal.com

The Five Most Pet-Friendly Airlines of 2009
- www.petfinder.com/pet-travel

Traveling Abroad/International Travel
- www.petfriendlytravel.com/intl_travel
- www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/pet_travel/pet_travel_basics.shtml
- www.petsonthego.com/resourcesintl.html

Additional Rules
- www.pettravel.com/airline_rules.cfm

[1] http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/publications/animals.htm
[2] www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/pet_travel/pet_travel_basics.shtml
[3] www.airlines.org/PassengersCargo/PassengerInfo/Pages/AirTravelforYourPet.aspx
[4] www.aa.com/i18n/travelInformation/specialAssistance/travelingWithPets.jsp
[5] www.southwest.com/travel_center/animals.html
[6] www.delta.com/planning_reservations/special_travel_needs/pet_travel_information/pet_travel_options/index.jsp
[7] www.faa.gov/passengers/fly_pets/cabin_pets/

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