

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

American Veterinary Medical Association  
[www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)

Import and Export and Interstate Travel –  
Veterinary Practice Resource Center – AVMA  
[www.avma.org/services/vprc/travel.asp](http://www.avma.org/services/vprc/travel.asp)

United States Department of Transportation  
Aviation Consumer Protection Division  
<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/publications/animals.htm>

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
Animal Care Pet Travel Page  
[www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_welfare/pet\\_travel/pet\\_travel.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/pet_travel/pet_travel.shtml)

USDA Veterinary Services Area Offices Locator  
[www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/area\\_offices/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/area_offices/)

International Air Transport Association Live Animals  
Transportation by Air (includes guidelines on selecting an  
appropriately sized animal carrier)  
[www.iata.org/whatwedo/cargo/live\\_animals/index.html](http://www.iata.org/whatwedo/cargo/live_animals/index.html)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Frequently Asked Questions about Animal Importation  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/animal/faq.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/animal/faq.htm)

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# Traveling With Your Pet



*Brought to you by your veterinarian and the  
American Veterinary Medical Association*



## Planning and Preparation

Planning and preparation are important when traveling with family pets. There are dogs and cats that cannot withstand the rigors of any type of travel due to illness, injury, or temperament. If this is the case, discuss with your veterinarian options such as hiring a reliable pet-sitter or housing your pet in a clean, well-managed boarding facility.

For car travel, consider whether or not your pet is comfortable in the vehicle before committing to a long road trip. A car-sick pet is sure to make the trip miserable for everyone. When planning your trip, if you will be staying with friends or family along the way, be considerate and ask them in advance if your pet is welcome. The same applies to choosing hotels, motels, parks, and campgrounds. Always check if pets are allowed or if kennel facilities are available. If a hotel or motel claims to be “pet friendly,” clarify exactly what that means to be sure it will accommodate you and your pet’s needs. If your 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. Before leaving home, consider bringing along a portable kennel for use in hotel rooms or the homes of friends or relatives who are not comfortable allowing your pet to roam freely when no one is home.

Whether you travel by car or by plane, be sure your pet is wearing an ID tag and, if possible, also has an imbedded identification microchip. While both should contain accurate contact information, consider not including your pet’s name on its ID tag. How a pet responds to hearing its name used could be helpful in reuniting a lost or stolen pet with its rightful owner. Grooming (bathing, combing, trimming nails) before a trip, plus taking along your pet’s favorite food, toy(s), and dishes will make your pet more comfortable. Carry proof of rabies vaccination and a current health certificate when crossing state or international borders. Finally, keep a printed photograph (a digital copy is also good to have) of your pet with you to assist with identification in case your pet is lost.

Most importantly, before undertaking any trip, consult your veterinarian to ensure that all required vaccinations are up-to-date and to receive a certificate of veterinary inspection within ten days prior to travel by air.

## Travel By Air

Transporting pets by air concerns pet owners the most. Certain breeds such as brachycephalic (short-nosed) dogs and cats may have difficulty with air travel. Federal regulations require that pets be at least 8 weeks old and weaned at least 5 days before flying. Most airlines that will transport pets require a certificate of veterinary inspection (health certificate) that is issued within 10 days prior to travel. Today, many major airlines allow cats and small dogs to travel in specially designed carry-on luggage that will fit underneath the seat. If you are traveling internationally, consult your veterinarian and/or your state’s USDA Veterinary Services Area Office or the destination country’s embassy or consulate about additional travel restrictions or quarantine requirements.

Whenever possible, book a nonstop flight and avoid plane changes and busy holidays. During warm weather months, choose early morning or late evening flights. In colder months, choose midday flights. As of the revision date of this brochure, regulations associated with the Federal Animal Welfare Act 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 (7.2 C) or more than 85 degrees F (29.5 C) for more than 45 minutes when the animal is transferred between the terminal and the plane, or for more than 4 hours when the animal is in a holding facility. However, the prohibition against exposure to temperatures below 45 degrees F is waived if a veterinarian provides an acclimation certificate stating that the dog or cat can be exposed to lower temperatures. Your veterinarian cannot issue 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. If your pet will be traveling with you in the cabin, arrange to check-in as late as possible to reduce the amount of time your pet will have to spend in the busy terminal.



The various airlines occasionally update their pet travel regulations including restrictions on breeds and size, restrictions relating to weather conditions and time of year, and charges for checked kennels. Consult with your veterinarian to determine what is best for your pet's well-being and ask about current airline regulations.

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**Defective kennels are the most common cause of escaped or injured animals during air travel.**

***Approved 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), sit erect, turn around, and lie down in a natural position.
- Latch securely.
- Be strong and free of interior protrusions, with handle or grips.
- Have a solid, leak-proof bottom 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 adequately ventilated so that airflow is not impeded.

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Take time to accustom your pet to the crate in which it will be traveling. At the airport, you may be asked to remove your pet from the carrier so the carrier can be put through an x-ray scanner. To minimize the chance that you will have to chase a loose pet through the airport, put a halter or collar and leash on your pet before you put it in the carrier.

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 because they can increase the risk of heart or respiratory problems.

## **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 unpleasant destination. If your dog has a problem with carsickness, your veterinarian can prescribe medication that will help it feel more comfortable during long trips. 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 the driver's feet. Providing a familiar toy or blanket can help make your pet more comfortable in its carrier. Regardless of the length of the trip, pets should not be left unattended in a car.



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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, and should never be allowed to sit on the driver's lap. Harnesses, tethers, and other accessories to secure pets during car travel are available at most pet stores. 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. Don't let your pet ride with its head outside the car window as particles of dirt or other debris can enter the eyes, ears, and nose, causing injury or infection.



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During the trip, maintain your regular feeding routine and serve 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. On long trips, feed your pet 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.



## 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 for current information.

## Camping With Pets

Traveling 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. Carry an adequate supply of water for you and your dog. Be considerate of other campers. Prior to the trip, ask your veterinarian about flea, tick, and heartworm prevention and make sure your pet is vaccinated against rabies. Before taking your dog on a long hike, be sure your pet is physically able to handle the exercise.



## Additional Pet Travel & Health Tips

- When traveling by car, pack a simple pet first-aid kit that includes assorted bandages, antiseptic cream, an anti-diarrheal 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.