

Health Certificates (Federal and International)

Peter S. Sakas DVM, MS
Niles Animal Hospital and Bird Medical Center
7278 N. Milwaukee Ave. Niles, IL 60714
Ph 847-647-9325 Fax 847-647-8498
www.nilesanimalhospital.com

Health certificates are required for pets which are traveling. It is an absolute necessity when pets are traveling on an airplane or are traveling internationally.

If a pet is traveling by car in the continental United States I have never personally heard of an instance of an owner being asked to produce a health certificate. However, what we strongly encourage is to have a copy of the vaccination documentation available with the appropriate tags (definitely the Rabies tag) or record/receipt. If you are traveling into Canada with your pet we highly recommend having a health certificate just in case it would be requested at the border. Generally, it may not be required, however, we have had instances where clients were asked to produce a health certificate. It all depends how much of a stickler the border agent is about requirements.

It is also useful to have a copy of the medical history of your pets with you in case veterinary care was required. In this way, the attending veterinarian could see which conditions your pet has, had in the past and what medications it may be presently taking.

For domestic flights there is not much of a problem. Check with the airlines to determine if you can bring the pet in the cabin with you, what restrictions there are and what type of carrier they will allow you to use. If the pet is too large to fit under the seat in a carrier then it will have to be placed in baggage. You will also need a health certificate and proof of Rabies vaccination for dogs and cats. Those forms are available here and need only to be signed by one of our veterinarians.

If you are traveling internationally it has become much more cumbersome as each nation has their own set of requirements. You would have to go to the USDA website to check out what are the requirements for your pets to travel. Certain countries may ban particular types of animals so it is important to research this thoroughly. The proper forms from the foreign country need to be brought in to us so they can be filled out. A form also needs to be filled out for the USDA and then that form needs to be taken to the USDA office so it can be signed by a government official before travel.

As you can see, taking your pet internationally can be a long, complicated and drawn out process. That is why it is essential to do your homework early so you can fulfill all the requirements in advance so you are not under the gun at the last minute or due to lack of time be unable to fulfill one of the requirements.