

## **Traveling with Your Pet**

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### **What should I think about when deciding to travel with my pet?**

- Make sure your pet is comfortable with travel
  - Some pets cannot handle travel because of illness, injury, age or temperament.
  - If your pet is not good with travel, you should consider a reliable pet-sitter or talk to your veterinarian about boarding facilities in your area.
- Make sure your pet has identification tags with up-to-date information.
- Having your pet implanted with a microchip can improve your chances of getting your pet back if it becomes lost. The microchip must be registered with your current contact information, including a cell phone number. A tag is included when you have a microchip that has the microchip number and a mobile contact of the owner, so if the pet is found, they can use the tag to determine ownership without having to contact a veterinarian. Contact the microchip company for a replacement tag if you've lost yours, and for information on how to update your personal information when traveling.
- If you are taking your pet across state or international borders, a health certificate is required. The health certificate must be signed by a veterinarian after your pet has been examined and found to be free of disease. Your pet's vaccinations must be up to date in order for the health certificate to be completed.
- Make sure that your pet is allowed where you are staying. Some accommodations will allow pets and some will not, so check in advance. Also, when traveling, you should bring a portable kennel with you if you have to leave your pet unattended.
  - **Staying with Friends or Family:** Inform your host that your pet will be coming along and make sure that your pet is a welcomed guest as well.
  - **Staying in a Hotel or Motel:** Stay at a pet friendly place. Some hotels and motels only accept small pets or pets under a certain weight; when making a reservation, make sure you inquire about the terms of their pet policy. Try to minimize the amount of time your pet will be alone in the room. When leaving your pet alone in the room, inform the front desk that your pet is being left alone in the room and place a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door. Make sure the hotel/motel knows how they can contact you if there are any problems.
  - **Staying at a Park, Campground or Marina:** Make sure these places are pet friendly, clean up after your pet and always keep your pet on a leash.

### **Whom should I contact as I am considering travel arrangements?**

- Your veterinarian
- The airline or travel company
- The accommodations: hotel, motel, park, camping ground or marina
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal & Plant Inspection Service, Veterinary Services: [www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/sregs](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/sregs) or 800-545-USDA (8732) and press #2 for State Regulations
- Foreign Consulate or Regulatory Agency (if traveling to another country)
- If you are traveling to another country (or even Hawaii), there may be quarantine or other health requirements
- If traveling out of the continental United States, you should contact these agencies at least 4 weeks in advance

### **What should I bring with me on my trip?**

- Your veterinarian's contact information
- List of Veterinarians and 24 hour Emergency Hospitals along the way and close to your destination. To find a listing of Veterinarians & Pet Emergency Hospitals in the United States, contact:
  - AVMA Search
  - State VMA
  - American College of Veterinary Emergency & Critical Care
  - Veterinary Emergency & Critical Care Society
  
- National Animal Poison Control (*ASPCA Web site*) 888-426-4435
- Identification
  - Current color photo of your pet
  - ID tag should include:
    - Owner's name, current home address and home phone number
  - Travel ID tag should include:
    - Owner's local contact phone number and address
    - Contact information for your accommodations (hotel, campground etc)
  - The microchip registration should be updated with your current contact information including a cell phone number.
- Medical Records
  - Current copies of your pet's medical records including pre-existing conditions and medications (especially when re-locating or traveling out of the country). For travel within the United States, a brief summary of medical conditions would be sufficient.
- Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (health certificate)
  - Proof of vaccinations (Proof of rabies vaccination required) and other illnesses
  - Requires an examination by a licensed and accredited veterinarian to make sure the animal is not showing signs of disease.
- Acclimation certificate for air travel
  - This is only required by some airlines, so check to see if your airline requires this.
- Items for your pet
  - Prescribed medications (adequate supply for entire duration of trip and several days' surplus supply, just in case)
  - Collar, leash, harness
  - Crate
  - Bed/blankets
  - Toys
  - Food and cool, fresh water
  - Food and water dishes
- First Aid Kit for your pet\**For more information on Pet First Aid and First Aid Kits, please go to the AVMA Pet First Aid Site*

**Where do I get a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (health certificate) and acclimation certificate, if needed?**

Many states require an up-to-date Certificate of Veterinary Inspection from a licensed, accredited veterinarian when traveling. Your pet must be examined by a veterinarian in order for a health certificate to be issued. This certificate basically indicates your pet is healthy to travel and is not showing signs of a disease that could be passed to other animals or to people. Certain vaccinations must be up to date for a health certificate to be issued. As part of the exam, your veterinarian may check for heartworm disease and prescribe heartworm preventative medication. When you return home, your veterinarian may recommend a follow-up examination to make sure that your pet did not pick up any diseases or parasites while traveling.

You will need a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection to travel and some airlines require an acclimation certificate. Both of these certificates can only be completed and signed by a federally accredited

veterinarian. If your veterinarian is not federally accredited, you will need to find an accredited veterinarian in your area, by contacting your USDA Area Office.

### **Can I bring my pet out of the country with me?**

Yes, but keep in mind that you have to follow both the United States regulations as well as the regulations in the other country to which you are traveling. You should contact the Consulate or Embassy in that country to find out their regulations. Talk to your veterinarian about the risks of disease to your pet and have your pet vaccinated appropriately based on the risks. Some countries (and Hawaii) require quarantine of your pet upon arrival, Knowing the requirements before you travel helps you decide if you are going to take your pet or leave it at home, and prepares you for what to expect if you do take your pet with you.

### **Can I bring my pet camping?**

Yes. The same rules apply when taking your pet camping. Talk to your veterinarian about flea, tick and heartworm prevention as well as specific risks associated with camping outdoors. (such as leptospirosis and other diseases).

Keep your pet on a leash and in your sight; and be considerate of other campers. Clean up after your pet. Being outside, your pet can be exposed to many different wild animals like skunks, raccoons, snakes and other animals that can injure your pet or expose them to disease. Do not let your pet chase or come into contact with wildlife—it can be dangerous for both your pet and the wild animal.

## **Forms of Travel**

### **Traveling by Plane**

#### **What can I do to prepare my pet for air travel?**

- Check with airlines because they may have restrictions on breed and size.
- Most airlines also require a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (health certificate) issued within 10 days of travel.
- Federal regulations require pets to be at least 8 weeks old and they should be weaned at least 5 days before flying.
- Talk to your veterinarian about feeding schedules. It is usually recommended that pets fly on an empty or nearly empty stomach. The pet's age, dietary needs and size, and the time and distance of the flight should all be taken into consideration.

#### **What is the best way to choose flights appropriate for my pet?**

- Reservations should be made for you and your pet at the same time because airlines often limit how many pets are allowed on each flight.
- Try to book a non-stop flight and avoid plane changes when possible.
- When possible, avoid flying during busy holidays.
- In warm weather, choose early morning or late evening flights.
- In colder weather, choose mid-day flights.
- Reconfirm flight arrangements the day before you leave to minimize the chance of unexpected changes.

#### **What should I do on the day of the flight?**

- Arrive to the airport early so you have time to exercise your pet.
- If your pet will be in the cabin, check in as late as possible to reduce the time your pet will have to wait in the terminal.
- Place your pet in its crate and pick it up as soon as you arrive at your destination.
- Notify the flight attendant that your pet is in cargo hold.

#### **What is an acclimation certificate?**

- This is a form from your veterinarian that will waive the low temperature Federal regulation as stated in the Animal Welfare Act.
- If the airline cannot guarantee that the animal will not be in temperatures lower than 45°F (7.2°C) for more than 45 minutes when the animal is moved between the terminal and the plane, or for

more than 4 hours when the pet is in a holding facility, and you don't have an acclimation certificate, the airline will not let your pet fly.

- Airlines cannot ship animals if temperatures will be higher than 85° F (29.5 C) for more than four consecutive hours while in animal holding areas of airport terminals or for more than 45 minutes while transferring the animal between the aircraft and the animal holding area, under any circumstances.

#### **Do I need to get an acclimation certificate?**

- Some airlines will require an acclimation certificate in order to let your pet travel.
- Acclimation certificates are written at the discretion of the veterinarian, and are based on the veterinarian's assessment of the pet's health.
- There are no acclimation certificates that allow pets to be shipped when conditions are above 85°F (29.5°C).

#### **Should I tranquilize or sedate my pet for long flights?**

It is recommended that you DO NOT give tranquilizers to your pet when traveling by air because it can increase the risk of heart and respiratory problems. Short-nosed dogs and cats sometimes have even more difficulty with travel. Airlines may require a signed statement that your pet has not been tranquilized prior to flying.

#### **What are crates approved for air travel?**

It is best to purchase an approved crate prior to travel (at the airline or local pet store) so you have time to let your pet get used to the crate and be comfortable. If your pet is small and can fit comfortably in an airline approved carrier, your pet may be able to travel with you in the cabin.

#### **Approved crates should:**

- Be large enough for your pet to stand (without touching the top of the cage), turn around and lie down
- Be strong and free of interior protrusions, with handles or grips
- Have a leak-proof bottom with plenty of absorbent material
- Be ventilated on opposite sides, with exterior knobs and rims that will not block airflow
- Be clearly labeled with owners name, home address and phone number, destination contact information and a sign stating "Live Animals" with arrows showing which way is upright.

### **Traveling by Boat**

#### **How do I prepare my pet for traveling in my boat?**

- For personal boats, take time to allow your pet to become familiar with your boat.
- Provide a ramp for your pet to easily get on and off the boat, or carry your pet on and off the boat.
- Call ahead to make sure the marina or park is pet friendly.

#### **What items should I bring with me to keep my pet safe?**

- Your pet should wear a proper-fitting personal flotation device (a life jacket) at all times to keep your pet safe in and around water, even if they know how to swim.
- Applying sunscreen prevents sunburn to your pet, especially pets with light skin and short or thin haircoats. Ask your veterinarian to recommend a non-toxic, non-skin irritating sunscreen for your pets.
- Provide non-slip bathroom rugs to assist your pet from sliding on the wet boat and from burning their paws.
- You should have your pet in a carrier, or on a harness or leash to prevent them from jumping or falling overboard.

#### **How will my pet go to the bathroom when on a boat?**

You can train your dog to use a piece of astroturf, a box of sod or newspaper. For cats and other small animals that use litter boxes, make sure there is a covered litterbox secured to the floor inside the boat.

### **What should I do to prepare when traveling on a cruise with my pet?**

- For public boats, check with the boating company to find out their requirements and restrictions.
- Most boating companies will require you to provide a regulation carrier and a leash for dogs.
- You will also need a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (health certificate) and possibly a travel form, depending on the areas that you will be visiting.

### **What are some other things to think about when traveling by boat?**

- When traveling by boat, your pet should have exercise before boarding and when you make stops.
- When traveling to foreign countries, you will need an International Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (health certificate).
- You may also need a permit and have to fill out a form
- Some pets get motion sicknesses on boats. If your pet becomes motion sick in the car, it will likely be sick on a boat. Talk to your veterinarian about alternate traveling suggestions or medications.

## **Traveling by Car**

### **What can I do to prepare my pet for traveling in a car?**

- If your pet does not ride well in a car, consider leaving your pet at home, with friends or family, or in a boarding facility.
- If you don't often take your pet in the car, start with short trips to "fun" destinations (such as a dog-friendly park or play area) to help your pet get used to riding in a car.
- If your pet gets car sick, talk to your veterinarian about alternate traveling suggestions or medications to keep them comfortable.

### **What should I do to keep my pet safe and healthy?**

- Make frequent stops (about every 2-3 hours) to allow your pet to go to the bathroom and get some exercise.
- Properly restrain your pet in the car to prevent injury to your pets, you and to other drivers.
- Do not let your pet ride in the back of a truck. If your pet must ride in the truck bed, they should be confined in a protective kennel that is secured to the truck to prevent injury. Pets should not be allowed to ride with their heads outside the window. Dirt and other debris can enter their eyes, ears and nose and cause injury or infection.
- Pets should not be allowed to ride on the driver's lap or near the driver's feet. Small pets should be confined in crates or in travel-safe dog beds, and larger pets should be appropriately restrained with harnesses attached to the car's seat belts.
- Cats should be transported in carriers.
- Providing a familiar blanket and/or safe toy can help make your pet more comfortable during the trip.

## **Traveling by Train or Bus**

### **Can my pet travel with me on a train or bus?**

Most states restrict the travel of pets on trains or buses. Exceptions are made for guide or service dogs. Check with your carrier to find out if your pet can come with you and what rules and regulations apply.

## **Other Resources for Pet Owners**

- AVMA Travel Section
- AVMA Traveling with your pet brochure
- Import/Export & Interstate Travel
- Domestic & International Travel Requirements
- FAQs about bringing animals into the United States (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site*)
- USDA/APHIS information page (*USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Web site*)
- Pets Welcome (*PetsWelcome.com*)

- AAA PetBook for a list of more than 13,000 pet friendly properties in the US and Canada (*AAA Web site*)
- Pet Friendly Hotels (*pet-friendly-hotels.net*)
- Hotels Allowing Pets (*HotelsAllowingPets.com*)
- Pet Travel (*PetTravel.com*)
- Trips with Pets (*TRIPSwithPETS.com*)
- Pet Friendly (*PetFriendly.com*)
- Dog Friendly (*DogFriendly.com*)
- Pet Air (*Pet Air, Inc. Web site*)
- Pet Airways (*Pet Airways Web site*)

This article was excerpted from materials provided by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). Visit the website for more information. [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)