

Dog and Cat Welfare During Transport



Transporting animals requires careful planning to ensure their safety, health, and well-being. Whether traveling by air, road, or train—whether for relocation, rescue, breeding, or personal reasons - this factsheet can be used when consulting with a veterinarian.

Key Aspects to Ensure Welfare

- Correct Documents & Preparation:** Having the right documents and preparing well are crucial for a safe and smooth journey. Each country is different and researching entry requirements is key.
- Identification & Health Checks:** In many countries, every animal must be identified by an ISO-approved microchip embedded under the skin and have all required vaccinations and health checks. The caregiver should check the regulations for the destination country before traveling.
- Journey Length:** Consider the length of the journey and plan for regular **breaks for rest, water, food** and elimination opportunities.
- Public Safety Considerations:** Ensure that the transportation method and the animal's container protects the animal and the public from harm.
- Fit to Travel:** Assess the animal's **physical as well as mental and emotional health**, considering breed, age, and medical conditions. Despite apparent fitness for transport, some airlines restrict certain breeds due to the risk of respiratory compromise. Verify vaccinations and parasite control are current.
- Loading, Unloading, and Handling:** Handle animals with care during loading and unloading to avoid stress or injury.
- Preparing for the Journey:** The animal should gradually be exposed to the travel crate and the sounds they might experience to familiarize. Have a plan to manage any stress or anxiety, possibly with anxiolytic medication, supplements, pheromones and diets and Ensure all travel documents are in order.
- Transport Conditions:** Use a secure, well-ventilated crate that is the right size according to the IATA LAR (Live Animal Regulations) if traveling by air. Keep the environment safe with proper temperature, ventilation, and noise control. Check the animal's well-being when possible during the journey, ensuring they have access to water, food and elimination opportunities as often as is necessary.

Pre-Travel Veterinary Checklist

- A microchip implanted and registered? Does it meet the destination country's requirements? Note that this must be before travel-related blood tests are taken.
- Are all vaccinations current according to the destination country's requirements?
- Are all necessary blood test results ready and up to date?
- Are all necessary internal and external parasite control done at the required times?

Transportation

- Ensure a safe and comfortable travel environment.
- Ensure that there will be regular stops or checks for water, feeding and elimination intervals during long trips and anticipated time to next access.
- Consider using cage liners in the travel carrier for dogs and cats to absorb soiled material. If the animal tends to chew or swallow the pads, consider alternatives.



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Fitness for transport assessment

Physical health considerations

- What is the animal's baseline breed? Are there breed-predisposed restrictions for entry into a country?
- What is the animal's age and reproductive status?
- Presence of acute or chronic illnesses? Chronic medication administration? How will this be managed?
- Does the animal show signs of pain or discomfort? Consider Osteoarthritis pain possibly worsened by confinement. Consider special provisions needed to ensure freedom from pain.
- What is the animal's gastrointestinal health status? Stress gastritis, motion sickness, enteritis should be considered and **possibly pre-emptively treated** for GI Health stress gastritis, enteritis, motion sickness.
- Is this a brachycephalic? Some airlines for health reasons do not accept brachycephalics! What special preparations are needed (larger crate size, Brachycephalic Fit To Fly Assessment, weight loss or even surgery needed before travel?)

Environment

- Are transportation areas maintaining suitable temperature, humidity, and ventilation to prevent overheating or hypothermia?
- Are there procedures in place to minimise noise, vibration, wind, and sudden movements that might harm or frighten the animal?
- Is the crate securely fastened within the conveyance with safe latches (cable ties or similar) to minimise excessive shifting and prevent escape?
- Are there measures implemented to monitor the animal regularly? e.g. videocams

Post-Travel

Emergency Preparedness

- Are there signs of travel-related stress or health issues upon close examination?
- If yes, schedule a follow-up veterinary examination or get information of local veterinarians at the destination in case of emergencies.



Mental/Emotional health considerations

- What is the animal's **baseline emotional health status**?
- Is the animal accustomed to being restrained in a travel carrier without stress?
- Will separation from the caregiver be easily tolerated?
- Does the animal have any special needs e.g. **behavioural or medical diagnoses that may affect the suitability to travel**?
- Is the animal anxious or easily stressed?
- Is this animal noise-phobic or noise-sensitive?
- Have you discussed and recommended appropriate anxiolytic medications, supplements, pheromones, and diets?

Compliance

- Have you reviewed and do you understand the legal requirements for pet importation in all relevant jurisdictions and the carrier's rules, requirements, and limitations?
- Is all necessary documentation ready for cross-border travel before departure?
- Are there contingency plans in place for any issues that may arise during transport?

