

AIR TRAVEL TIPS

TOP TEN TIPS FOR SAFE AIR TRAVEL WITH YOUR PET



Traveling can be highly stressful, both for you and the four-legged members of your family. But with thoughtful preparation, you can ensure a safe and comfortable trip for everyone.

The ASPCA urges pet owners to think twice about flying their pets on commercial airlines, especially if they plan on checking them in as cargo. The Air Transport Association has reported that in the past, approximately 5,000 pets—or 1 percent of the companion animals are flown on commercial planes—have been injured, lost or killed during transport.

"Unless your animal is small enough to fit under your seat and you can bring him or her in the cabin, the ASPCA recommends pet owners to not fly their animal," says Lisa Weisberg, ASPCA Senior Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Policy. If pet owners have already committed to transporting their pets on commercial airlines, the ASPCA is offering the following top ten tips for safe air travel with your pet:

1. Make an appointment with your pet's veterinarian for a check-up, and make sure all vaccinations are up-to-date. Obtain a health certificate from your veterinarian dated within 10 days of departure.
2. Make sure your pet is wearing a collar and an identification tag. Breakaway collars are best for cats. The collar should also include destination information in case your pet escapes.
3. Book a direct flight whenever possible. This will decrease the chances that your pet is left on the tarmac during extreme weather conditions or mishandled by baggage personnel.
4. Purchase a USDA-approved shipping crate that is large enough for your pet to stand, sit and turn around in comfortably. Shipping crates can be purchased from many pet supply stores and airlines.
5. Write the words "Live Animal" in letters at least one inch tall on top of and at least one side of the crate. Use arrows to prominently indicate the upright position of the crate. On the top of the crate, write the name, address and telephone number of your pet's destination point, and whether you will be accompanying him or if someone else is picking him up. Make sure that the door is securely closed, but not locked, so that airline personnel can open it in case of an emergency. Line the crate bottom with some type of bedding—shredded paper or towels—to absorb accidents.
6. Affix a current photograph of your pet to the top of the crate for identification purposes. Should your pet escape from the carrier, this could be a lifesaver. You should also carry a photograph of your pet.
7. The night before you leave, make sure you've frozen a small dish or tray of water for your pet. This way, it can't spill during loading, and will melt by the time he's thirsty. Tape a small pouch, preferably cloth, of dried food outside the crate. Airline personnel will be able to feed your pet in case he gets hungry on long-distance flights or a layover.
8. Tranquilizing your pet is generally not recommended, as it could hamper his breathing. Check with your veterinarian first.
9. Tell every airline employee you encounter, on the ground and in the air, that you are traveling with a pet in the cargo hold. This way, they'll be ready if any additional considerations or attention is needed.
10. If the plane is delayed, or if you have any concerns about the welfare of your pet, insist that airline personnel check the animal whenever feasible. In certain situations, removing the animal from the cargo hold and deplaneing may be warranted. **ASPCA**.