

The Ultimate Guide to Traveling with Pets



2022

Starwood Pet Travel

INTRODUCTION



Making a long-distance move is exciting, but it's also stressful and a great deal of work — especially when your dog or cat is moving with you. If only you could explain to them how great their new place will be, how much fun they'll have when they arrive, and that there's nothing to be afraid of on the trip to their new home. You may be wondering "is it safe for dogs or cats to fly?" — In most cases, the answer is a clear "yes" — when you take the proper precautions. You can do a lot to make your pet's trip easier, but forgetting just one required document or failing to meet one health requirement could result in unnecessary inconvenience and stress — or worse.

This guide is packed with helpful information so you can ensure your pet's big adventure goes as smoothly as possible.

Health Requirements

Depending your pet's destination, they will have to meet a variety of health requirements in order to enter that country. These can vary by country and some destinations are far more complicated than others.

You'll need to check your destination country's local government website for pet import requirements and can also utilize other resources. It's important that you don't miss anything and don't try to take any shortcuts so that you don't run into issues.

You can also use the [USDA APHIS Pet Travel website](#) to view the requirements for moving pets from the USA to other countries.

Below are the most common requirements for most destinations.

Microchip

Your pet will need a microchip (typically implanted before the most recent Rabies vaccination). You should have your vet scan it at every visit to make sure it is still readable and is correctly recorded on all of your pet's paperwork.

Vaccinations

Nearly every destination requires a current Rabies vaccination. Some countries also require additional vaccinations for dogs (DHPP, Bordetella, Leptospirosis, CIV) and cats (FVRCP, Feline Leukemia)

Blood Testing

Some destinations require a rabies titer blood test and waiting period prior to entry into the country. Some countries also have additional blood test requirements - sometimes only for dogs.

Other Treatments

Some destinations will also require additional treatments such as a tapeworm treatments, internal & external parasite treatments and heart worm preventive.

Most pet import requirements are time sensitive, so you'll need to be careful to ensure you are following the rules.

Paperwork



Depending on where you're headed, the paperwork for your pet can be extensive. The full list of required documents will depend on your destination country. However, below are the most common forms of paperwork that is needed.

01 Health Records

Most destinations will require some sort of document showing proof of microchip, current vaccinations, required blood test results and other required treatments. You can obtain these documents from your vet but do make sure they have all the required information on them.

02 Health Certificates

Most destinations require their own international health certificate which must be completed by a government-approved veterinarian and then endorsed by the official government vet in your country of export. In the USA, these are called USDA-Accredited Veterinarians and the official USDA office will endorse the paperwork.

03 Import Permits

Some countries require an import permit for pets who will be traveling. You can work with a local pet transport company or your destination's department of agriculture to obtain this document.

04 Customs Forms

Some destinations require additional forms that the pet owner needs to complete in order for the animal to clear customs. If you are working with a pet transport company then they may also have additional forms so they can clear customs on your behalf. You can ask your local government office or pet transport company for the required documents.

Quarantine

Depending on your origin country, some destinations (like Australia, New Zealand and Singapore) require pets to spend time in quarantine. Quarantine periods typically range from 7-30 days if your pet is fully compliant with the import regulations.

Here are some questions to think about if your pet will need to go into quarantine.

Is visiting allowed?

Not all post entry quarantine facilities will allow visiting so you'll need to check. If visiting is allowed, it's usually limited to certain people and during certain times.

Can I arrange grooming?

Some quarantine facilities might have a grooming option either with an onsite room or the ability to hire a groomer to take care of your pet. This is not always possible so you will need to check.

How is food & medication handled?

Some quarantine facilities will provide a bland diet as part of their fees unless you have documentation that your pet requires a special diet. Others may require for you to provide your own food for your pet. If your pet requires a special diet or medication, you'll need to communicate that to the quarantine staff and arrange to have it shipped to their facility.

What are the fees & paperwork requirements?

Naturally, quarantine will not be free, and the fees for each destination will vary. Some facilities also require additional paperwork that you will need to complete for your pet.

Are there shorter term options?

Some quarantine facilities like in Hawaii and Singapore, have shorter quarantine term options if you follow certain steps. Not all quarantine facilities will allow this, but it doesn't hurt to ask.

Can I check in for updates?

Some quarantine facilities will provide the owner with regular updates, while others will only alert them if there is a problem or concern with the pet's health. Don't assume you will receive regular communication. You might have to be proactive in asking the best method of communication to see how your pet is doing.

Potential Hiccups

Even when everything is planned out perfectly and all of your pet's health and paperwork requirements are in order, sometimes you might come across some hiccups.

It's important to be aware and be flexible since we can't always control everything around us.

It's always a good idea to have a back up plan in case things don't go as smoothly as you'd hoped.

Weather

As you know, no one can control the weather. Sometimes inclement weather such as snow storms or extremely hot temperatures can impact flights and would be risky for pet travel. Keep an eye on the weather when your pet will be traveling and be prepared for potential flight cancellations or airlines not accepting pets.

Flight Delays & Embargoes

Just like flights can be cancelled or delayed for people, this can also happen for pets. Some airlines may also impose embargoes where they will not accept any pets for a period of time for a variety of reasons such as staff shortages, temperature or staff strikes.

Paperwork Problems

It's always a good idea to make sure you have printed and electronic copies of all of your pet's paperwork. In rare instances, the airline might misplace your pet's paperwork, which can cause customs delays when they arrive to your destination.



Travel Kennel



Pets who are flying will require a travel kennel that is compliant with the International Air Transport Association ([IATA](#))'s requirements.

You can purchase IATA-compliant travel kennels from a local pet store, Amazon or [Petmate](#).

Below are the basic requirements to ensure you have the appropriate travel kennel for your pet. They are also outlined on our blog post [here](#).



Size

Your pet must be able to stand up, sit down, lie down and spin around comfortably. Brachycephalic breeds (such as pugs or bulldogs) must have the next size larger kennel.

Ventilation

The kennel must have ventilation holes on both sides, the back and the door (front). The ventilation holes on the sides and back should only be on the top half of the kennel.

Bedding

The kennel floor should be lined with an absorbent bedding no more than 3 inches thick. You can use a pee-pee pad, crate pad and thin blanket, t-shirt or towel that smells like home.

Construction

Travel kennels for cats and dogs should be made of rigid plastic, metal, solid wood or plywood. They should be non-collapsible and may not have wheels on them. Wire crates are not acceptable.

Hardware

The door locking mechanism must be operable and made of metal. Plastic kennels must have metal nuts & bolts securing the top and bottom together. Twist locks or snap clips are not permitted.

Food/Water Bowls

The kennel must have two bowls that attach to the inside of the kennel door which can be filled from the outside. These will be for food / water while your pet is in transit.

Pre-Travel Tips

- Give your pet lots of love & affection leading up to the move.
- Get them acclimated to the travel kennel as early as possible.
- Try to keep their routine as normal as possible before the move.
- Try removing them from the chaos by keeping them in a specific part of the house or at daycare on days where movers are in and out.
- Get them groomed prior to travel.
- Trim their nails prior to travel.
- Give them plenty of exercise before they have to head to the airport.
- Don't give them too much food on the day of departure. Give them a small snack in the morning and provide plenty of water.

Post-Travel Tips

- Set up your pet's spot in their new home before they arrive.
- Use bedding or comfort items that smell familiar so they are more comfortable when they arrive.
- Don't give your pet too much food or water immediately after a flight. Give them small amounts of food and water periodically so they do not have an upset stomach.
- For larger dogs, keep an eye on the signs of bloat.
- If you are moving to a warmer climate, keep your pet cool and hydrated.
- Let them smell and explore their new home, but keep windows and doors shut so they do not escape.
- Slowly ease them back into their normal routine.

Dos

- Do acclimate your pet to the travel kennel well in advance. - This can help ease anxiety and make them feel more comfortable.
- Do your research. - You'll need to make sure your pet is compliant with the pet import requirements for your destination.
- Do discuss your pet's health and wellness with your vet. - Check for any pre-existing health conditions that may be of concern and make sure they are healthy to travel.
- Do send your pet with thin bedding. - You can provide a thin blanket, t-shirt or towel that smells like home as well as a crate pad (under 3 inches thick) and a pee-pee pad (optional).
- Do send your pet with a ziplock baggie of food. - You can provide 2-3 servings of food to go on top of their kennel in case of flight delays or layovers.
- Do talk to your tax advisor. - Depending on the reason for your move, your pet's relocation may be tax-deductible.

Don'ts

- Don't sedate your pet. - This can cause respiratory and cardiac problems when pets are up in the air at high altitudes. The airline can also refuse your pet for travel if they appear to be sedated.
- Don't try to skirt the rules. - Countries have pet import requirements for a reason so you need to comply with the rules. If you try to skirt the rules, your pet can potentially be quarantined, sent back to their origin or even risk euthanasia.
- Don't get a kennel that is too small. - Your pet needs to have plenty of room to be comfortable and also have enough ventilation. If the airline deems the travel kennel too small, they may be refused for travel.
- Don't give your pet too much food or water right before the flight. - Drinking or eating too much, too quickly can cause an upset stomach. Additionally, pets tend to travel better on a relatively empty stomach.
- Don't wait until the last minute. - The planning and requirements for moving pets to other countries can take months to complete, so don't drag your feet with preparation.

How much will it cost?

Pet travel can be expensive and depending on your destination, the associated fees can really add up. The total cost for moving a pet will vary depending on your destination, pet's breed, pet's size & travel kennel. Here are some costs to keep in mind as you plan for your pet's big adventure.

VET FEES

- Vet exams
- Microchip
- Vaccinations
- Blood testing
- Other required treatments
- Completion of health certificate

DOCUMENTATION

- Import permit
- Endorsement of health paperwork

TRANSPORTATION

- Transport to/from vet offices
- Transport to/from the airport
- Transport to/from boarding or quarantine
- Air cargo charges & airline fees

QUARANTINE & CUSTOMS

- Quarantine fees
- Customs clearance fees



Frequently Asked Questions

Where do pets travel?

If your pet is not flying in-cabin with you and are traveling as accompanied baggage or cargo, then they will be underneath the plane in a space that is temperature controlled, pressurized and oxygenated. Live animals travel beneath the pilot and the pilot must sign off on a manifest so they are aware of any pets onboard. Your pet's travel kennel will be held into place by a thin netting that acts like a seatbelt to keep them safe and secure during takeoff and landing.

How will my pet go to the bathroom?

Dogs are typically provided a walk prior to check in and during layovers. Once your pet is checked in, they will need to stay inside their travel kennel. Cats are not usually let out unless there is a safe and secure room. Do note that litter boxes cannot be in the kennel. In some cases your pet may relieve themselves inside the kennel. If you gotta go, you gotta go.

What can travel with my pet?

The airlines have strict rules on what items are permitted to travel with pets. You can only send them with:

- Original documents for travel
- IATA approved travel kennel
- Crate pad that is no more than 3 inches thick
- Thin blanket, t-shirt or towel that smells like home
- Pee-pee pad (optional)
- 2 Food/water cups that latch onto the inside of the kennel door
- Zip lock baggie with 2-3 servings of food

How will my pet eat or drink?

Pets should be provided plenty of water for their trip. However, it is NOT recommended for pets to eat right before takeoff or during the flight. This can cause an upset stomach, which we of course want to avoid. If your pet has a layover, they will be provided more water and some food (depending on the length of the layover). Water will also be provided once they have landed as they are clearing through customs. If your pet will be boarding or spending time in quarantine throughout their trip, they will be provided food and water regularly.

Does anyone check in on pets on the plane?

No, there is no one traveling underneath the plane with pets. However, pets are typically booked on passenger flights that do have humans up above in the main cabin.

Can I be on the same plane?

In some cases it is possible to be on the same plane as your pet but this is not required or necessary. Due to the differences in how pet cargo reservations work compared to human flight reservations, it can actually be quite difficult to make sure your flights lineup. You do not need to travel on the same plane as your pet.

Should pets be sedated?

NO. This can negatively impact their breathing and respiration when they are up in the air at high altitudes. This can be even more dangerous for pets with pre-existing conditions or a snub-nose. If the airline believes that your pet has been sedated, then they can refuse your pet for travel.

Medication

If your pet requires medication, then it can be a little tricky when they are flying on a plane.

You will need to make special arrangements if your pet's medication is compulsory. Here are some things you'll need to keep in mind:

- Speak with your vet to make sure there are no concerns with your pet safely traveling if they miss a dose due to being in the air.
- Alert your pet relocation company well in advance so they are aware and can make the necessary arrangements.
- Alert the airline to make sure they will accept your pet's medication for travel. (Some airlines won't ship medication with pets).
- If your pet requires quarantine, you'll need to let them know in advance and in some cases will require a special letter from your vet or additional paperwork. You may also need to arrange the medication to be shipped to the quarantine facility so it can be administered there.
- If your pet will have a layover at an onsite airport pet facility, you'll need to check that it can be administered during their comfort stop by trained animal handlers and/or veterinarians.
- Make sure your pet's medication is properly labeled with their microchip number, pet details and administration & dosage instructions.
- Make sure you have extra medication on hand at your destination in case it is misplaced while they are in transit.

Do note that airline staff will NOT be able to administer medication to your pet prior to their departure or upon arrival. Additionally, medication cannot be administered while your pet is on the plane.





See Why Starwood is Leading the Industry

See why thousands of happy customers have worked with us!!

Pet travel can be daunting and it can be difficult to stay on top of everything required for your pet in addition to everything you have to organize with moving your family. Consider working with a professional that can take the stress of moving your pet out of your hands.



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