

**OFFduty**

baggage” with a passenger’s luggage when the passenger is on the same flight or as “live animal cargo” on a separate flight. Many airline cargo departments employ pet transportation specialists who can answer questions.

**Check immigration requirements.** Your installation transportation office will have details for the country to which you are shipping your pet. Families should also be aware that some destinations require animals to stay in quarantine for a period before they can be released, Hawaii included.

Air Force Master Sgt. Tracy Reagan-Ogas said she didn’t know about the quarantine in Hawaii. “Had I known, I am not too sure I would have come here. We came with two dogs, and within 48 hours, we had one.” She says her 7-year-old Pomeranian, Dandy, died at the Aiea, Hawaii, Animal Quarantine Station.

**Have the pet checked by a veterinarian.** Include a physical exam and any needed laboratory work that could indicate potential problems with the liver or kidneys, for example. Make sure vaccinations are cur-



rent and you have necessary health certificates. All flights and pets are different, Vroegindewey said, so talk to your veterinarian about concerns specific to your animal. Very young and very old pets are vulnerable, Vroegindewey said.

Some pets, such as pugs and bulldogs, do not fly well because of their difficulty in breathing. These “short-faced” dog breeds represent about half of the dogs that die while being shipped as cargo, according to the Transportation Department.

**Make sure your kennel crate meets airline and government specifications.** Your airline can provide this information. Make sure the pet’s kennel



has sufficient ventilation and space to allow the animal to turn freely, in a standing position, using normal body movements, and to stand, sit and lie in a natural position. Make sure the door latches securely.

**Allow your pet to become accustomed to the crate.** Your pet will be more comfortable in its temporary home during the flight. Use the crate as

a bed for a few days, for example.

**Make sure your pet has an ID tag.** It should include the pet’s name, your name and phone number, and your address or unit address. Mark the crate with the same information. Put a label on the top and at least one side of the crate with the words “Live Animal” printed in 1-inch-high letters.



**Don’t give your pet a big meal before a long flight.** Give your pet a larger meal the night before travel and a light snack before the flight.



**Don’t expect to be allowed to sedate your pet.** Continental supports the recommendation of the American Veterinarian Medical Association to not knowingly accept animals that have been sedated.

**Inform someone.** If you’re flying on the same flight as your pet, try to let a pilot or a flight attendant know a pet is in the cargo hold. The Transportation Department says the airlines “have a system for providing such notification, but it doesn’t hurt to mention it yourself.”

**Arrive at the airport early to check in your pet.** Keep the animal as calm as possible before the flight. A walk just before departure is a good idea. For cats, disposable litter boxes, available at pet supply shops, are easy to take along. □

**REPORTING PROBLEMS**

The Agriculture Department sets and enforces regulations for transporting animals, rules that apply to customers and pets, as well as the airlines.

Airlines must ship animals in a climate-controlled environment in cargo, said David Sacks, spokesman for the

department’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

He said reports of animal mistreatment by airline personnel should be directed to:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, APHIS, Animal Care Staff, 4700 River Road, Unit 84, Riverdale, MD 20737;

phone 301-734-7833. The phone number for the western regional office in Fort Collins, Colo., is 970-494-7478.

When a consumer submits a formal complaint, USDA sends an inspector to determine what happened, Sacks said. Information was not available on how many formal complaints have been submitted.

**GETTING HELP**

When it comes to shipping pets over long distances, there are alternatives to doing it all yourself.

For example, Pet Airways, a pets-only airline, allows pets to fly in the cabin and currently flies to and from nine cities.

Another option is a pet shipping service, sort of a pet travel agent. These companies don’t actually ship pets, but they do all or part of the legwork.

Through their international networks, they can handle any arrangements, such as making flight reservations with an emphasis on choosing the airline and schedule that best suits the well being of your particular pet, and arranging for pickup and delivery to and from your house.

They will take into consideration the age and any special health considerations of your pet. Costs are determined by the size and weight of the animal, the airline, the city of origin and destination, plus any additional services that you request, such as pickup and delivery from your house, quarantine arrangements in a foreign country and veterinary health certificates. Some companies give a small discount for military families, but most of the costs are fixed and don’t allow for a lot of flexibility, said Sally Smith, president of the Independent Pet and Animal Transportation Association International.

For more information, visit the Independent Pet and Animal Transportation Association International website at [www.ipata.com](http://www.ipata.com).