

FLYING WITHOUT DYING

Part 2: FLYING AS BAGGAGE OR CARGO



Have you read the first part of *FLYING WITHOUT DYING* (in my book)? I hope so, although if you're reading this, clearly I failed to talk you out of shipping your poor doggy in the belly of a plane. Okay, okay. I know that sometimes you just have to ship your dog—like when she's a Great Dane and you're moving to Great Britain. Hard to convince an air carrier to let your Dane cuddle by your feet. Just promise me you won't ship your dog because you think he might have fun spending the holidays with Grandma. Promise? My chapter *HOME ALONE* offers all sorts of alternatives.

Bunking with Suitcases For when you have no other choice than to ship your dog, here are some tips to give your dog the best shot at arriving safe and sound:

- **Know that puppies must be at least eight weeks old and weaned for at least 5 days.** Beware: many trainers and breeders believe that shipping puppies during their Fear Imprint Period (between roughly 8 and 11 weeks of age) may cause them lasting psychological problems.
- **Plan in advance to get a current certificate of health but wait until the last minute to get it.** Your certificate needs to be current within 10 days and travel plans can change. (Note: If you must vaccinate, do so *at last* a week before the flight if at all possible. Your dog may have a life-threatening reaction to the shot and no one will be there to help). Many domestic airlines will accept titer tests (see *RETHINKING VACCINATION*) in place of a shot. Check international vaccination requirements carefully; they're likely to be stricter than ours.
- **Fly on the same plane as your dog if at all possible.** Ask to watch Bruno board and deplane. Tell them your dog is a very expensive show dog (if he's gorgeous) or is co-starring on a new sitcom or is one of those dogs trained to detect cancer or heart disease in Humans. Airline personnel sometimes value "things" with high monetary value over those with mere sentimental value. Go figure.
- **Don't ship your dog when it's too hot or too cold.** Continental's veterinary consultant Dr. Walter Woolf told us that seasonal weather variations greatly affect canine air travel safety. Airlines have rules about travel during temperature extremes, but *your* rules should be even stricter. Sometimes airlines will ask you for a certificate-of-acclimation, which is a polite of asking if Fifi will survive extreme temperatures. Hello????? Tell the in-flight crew your expensive-dog story, too, and suggest they ask the Captain to keep an eye on belly temperature control.
- **Buy the best crate you can afford, making sure it conforms to regulations for your particular airline** and that it's strong, hard sided, safe

and comfortable for your dog. If you can't afford a new crate, check want ads or Ebay (www.ebay.com). Don't risk your dog's life with something new and flimsy and cheap.

- **Buy a non-spill water container** and teach your dog to use it. (Check out the Lixit Dog Water Bottle from www.petco.com.)
- **Make sure there's room for your baby to poop and pee without having to sleep in it but not so large that turbulence would throw her around the crate too much.** The one product I would never let any friend of mine fly without is The Pooch Pad Ultra Dry Transport System. Think of it as a disposable diaper with a foam pad underneath to keep your fellow comfy and dry during the long miserable trip. Find them at www.poochpad.com or at www.petsmart.com.
- **Give your dog a traveling companion in the form of a favorite (safe) cuddly toy.**
- **Get your dog used to the crate before flying.** Make it the place where he gets his favorite treats. You might even put him in it and go for short car rides to fun places if he's not already an inveterate traveler. (Ask your vet about safe remedies for the carsick dog.)
- **Make sure your dog has tags bearing a current phone number and address, and get that microchip or tattoo.** (See my chapter on DISAPPEARING DOGS.) Make sure tags are not of a size that might get stuck in crate grates.
- **Some places, like the UK and European Union, require that dog's a vaccination certificate match a chip or tattoo number.** They also require a waiting period and blood draw to check that the vaccination was effective which can take 4 to 6 months! See www.aianimal.com for more information.
- **Use a break-away collar** to keep your dog from strangling if his tags catch on his crate grating. Read about KeepSafe Break-Away Collar at www.keeptosecollar.com. And never use a choke collar or muzzle.
- **Mark the replace** all over with your name, address, several phone numbers (say to call collect) and the words LIVE ANIMAL with a big "up" arrow. **Tape a good photo of the dog to the replace, too, in case several dogs escape their crates, and carry another in your wallet. DO NOT lock the crate;** if your dog is in distress, no one will be able to help him and Security can't search it to see if your dog is smuggling contraband. Instead, tape the grating shut with packing tape, folding under the end of the tape to make a "pull-tab." Or encircle the crate with a quick-release bungee cord.

- **Attach a small bag of quality dry food to the outside of his crate. Note when your dog last ate, and how and when he should be fed in case of a delay.** You may need a vet's written notice if the dog is *not* to be fed.
- **Put a small cheap leash in a bag and attach it to the crate in case the dog needs a break on a delayed flight** (but don't expect that anyone will use it).
- **If you're changing planes with a long layover, or if your flight suffers a long delay, insist that your dog be removed and checked.** Do everything you can to make sure this actually happens.
- **If your dog is a loner, gradually get her used to other animals.** She may be riding side-by-side with a howling hound. Or a yowling cat! Talk about stress.
- **Consult your airline about breed bans before purchasing your ticket.** Some won't let certain "aggressive" breeds (like pit bulls) fly under any circumstance.

Flying Solo What if your pup has to travel solo, that is, as air cargo? This is too impossibly scary, but is sometimes (though rarely) unavoidable. Your only hope is to outsmart the baggage handlers.

- **If possible, ship on an airline with a dedicated animal air transport service.**
- **Avoid holidays or other peak travel times.** Send Bruno on a non-stop or direct flight, even if you have to drive him to a nearby town to do it. Every stop, and especially every change of plane, is a potential disaster.
- **Have someone waiting in baggage claim to rescue your baby the moment he lands.**
- **Select whatever level of service will ensure that your dog will be shipped on a specific flight on a specific day and time.** Don't assume that all cargo goes on a specific flight. It doesn't.
- **Some airlines require you to work with an animal shipper.** Contact The International Pet and Animal Transportation Association at www.pata.com (903-769-2267) to find companies that ship pets. Note that services are "primarily for those relocating rather than for those taking brief vacations with their pets." A flight facilitation company run by a veterinarian, Dr. Walter M. Woolf, VMD, www.airanimal.com offers (among other services) a "Pet PCS"

service to help relocating military personal. Call 800-635-3448 for details. Look at requirements of destination country or state.

If you're still planning on shipping your dog, promise me you'll do one last thing. Pretend you're gagged and trapped in a shipping container. You don't know where you're going, if you'll ever see your family again, if strangers might kill you. You can't tell anyone that your water container is dry and you're really hot. Or that you've soiled your crate with runny diarrhea. (You couldn't help it; you were so scared.) Also visit www.ASPCA.org, search "Safe Travel Tips," and try the Humane Society of the United States (www.hsus.org). You'll find articles trying to talk you out of sending your dog by air.

For consumer information on traveling with your dog, including ways to evaluate airlines and report problems, see our Links page under FLYING WITHOUT DYING.

Tranquilizing Many veterinarians warn against tranquilizing dogs before shipping, and many pet transporters will not accept tranquilized pets. When a dog is alone in the belly, a bad reaction can prove fatal. So don't do unless your vet recommends it.

Many holistic vets recommend using Bach Flower Rescue Remedy® to take the edge off your dog's anxiety. (For more information, ask your vet; also see our chapter PREVENTING THE PREVENTABLE or go to www.bachflower.com and click on "Pets.")

When Jiggy and I need to mellow out, Mom puts 4 drops of Rescue Remedy® in our water or drops it directly on our gums or rubs it on our ears. It helps us chill.

Have a safe journey, or as we dogs say, Bone Voyage.