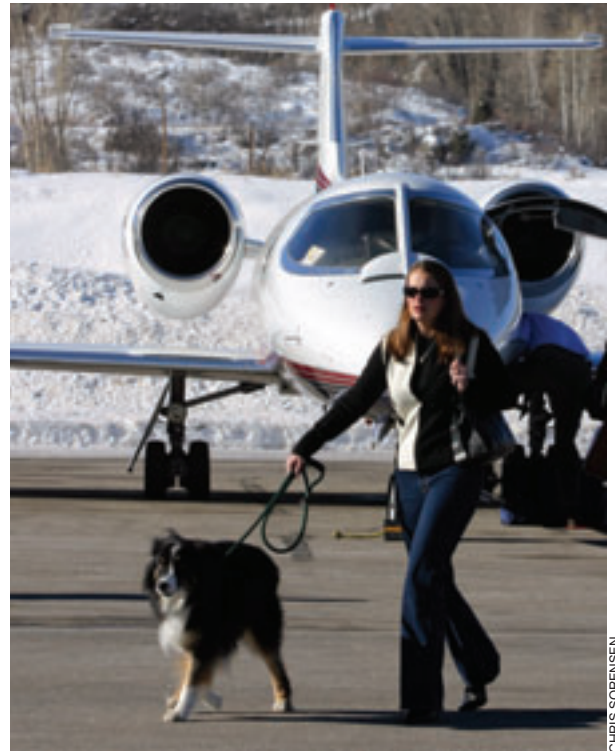


# pets on jets

Here's how to keep your furry friend happy from takeoff to touchdown and beyond.

by Meredith Saini



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A key advantage of owning an airplane is that it becomes an extension of your home. You can fill the cabin with all sorts of creature comforts, such as your daughter's favorite teddy bear or your son's video games. The cabin might also be host to one or more actual creatures, such as the prize Papillon dog your wife carries around in her large pink purse.

To most pet owners, an animal onboard an aircraft isn't just another piece of luggage—it's a family member and is treated accordingly. Despite the red-carpet treatment that many pets receive onboard their

owners' jets, however, not all are happy travelers. Dogs and cats can experience many of the same reactions and sensations that people do when flying, including airsickness, anxiety and dehydration. Owners must take the time to learn their pets' behavior and to ensure that their furry friends will be secure and calm in the airplane. Some tips:

**Take a trial run.** Dr. Bonnie Beaver, a veterinarian and animal behavior specialist at Texas A&M University, recommends taking your pet on a long trial run in the car before bringing it aboard an aircraft for the

first time. "You want a pet that has good manners while traveling—no pacing or salivating," she said. "An animal needs to be relaxed. That makes it less likely to become overly stressed, which can trigger urination and defecation. Emergency stops aren't as possible as they are in the car."

#### Teach him to sit.

Having a dog who knows how to obey basic verbal commands such as "sit"

and "down" can be very useful during a flight, Dr. Beaver said. For instance, if the animal begins to pace and act nervous during the flight, you can get it to lie down on its side and relax. This will allow it to breathe more slowly and focus its attention on you and being calm.

**Lug a jug.** Dr. Beaver said that some dogs are especially picky about the kind of water they drink. If they're used to filtered water at home, they might not drink tap water offered at the airport or on the jet. Make sure your pet will drink water from various sources or, if it refuses, bring a gallon of his regular water onboard the flight.

**Stock favorite foods.** Pack your pet's favorite eating dishes, along with enough of his food and treats, or call your caterer. John Celentano, coprincipal of Rudy's In-flight Catering, said the company receives so many requests from pet owners that it keeps a supply of dog and cat food, biscuits and rawhides on hand. While most customers are content to serve their dogs dry food and Milk Bones, Celentano said that some VIPs (Very Important Pets, of course) dine on filet mignon served on a silver platter.

"The portion is geared toward the size of the animal, but it is filet mignon, not a by-product," he added. "This is a portion



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meant for a human being. We'd charge the same as for a person. We're in the service business, and we're here to accommodate. There's no such thing as a strange request. It's not for us to pass judgment. In their eyes, their pet is part of their family and we respect that."

**Consider carriers.** Pet owners must consider how the animal will be restrained during the flight, especially during turbulence or whenever the captain turns on the "fasten seatbelt" sign. Dr. Beaver said no one-size-fits-all solution exists, and that successfully and safely securing the animal depends on its size and temperament.

Smaller pets, such as toy-sized dogs and most cats, can be safely carried onboard in the same sort of handheld plastic crate or canvas bag one would use for bringing the animal onto an airline flight. Larger dogs may require a harness or padded crate. Pet shops and specialty catalogs such as Doctors Foster and Smith ([www.drsfoster-smith.com](http://www.drsfoster-smith.com)) offer products designed for pets that travel with their owners.

**Try sedatives.** Pilot and veterinarian Dr. Jack Walther said that Benadryl and Dramamine (both available over-the-counter) work as canine sedatives, though cats don't respond particularly well to them. Both Dr. Walther and Dr. Beaver recommend checking with your veterinarian before administering any over-the-counter medication. "Some products tend to cause the animals to not be as efficient at regulating their body temperature, which is not a good thing," Dr. Beaver said.

Walther added that you should "be very careful when tranquilizing or sedating an animal," because severe reactions, including seizures, can occur. "If you think you need to sedate your animal, try it out ahead of time," he advised. "Be sure to do it at least an hour before you leave home."

**Find a vet.** Dogs and cats tend to be less susceptible than humans to pressurization-related ear and sinus discomfort because their auditory tubes are larger, Dr.

Beaver noted. Also, there is little evidence that they suffer from jet lag because, well, they sleep most of the day, anyway. Still, it's a good idea to know the name of a veterinarian in your destination city in case your pet should get sick during the trip. (If you're a NetJets fractional owner, you may have heard of the PennVet VIP program, which gives NetJets owners 24-hour phone access to a pet health expert at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine. Owners can use the hotline to get emergency medical advice and referrals to clinics anywhere in the U.S.)

**Research foreign rules.** Do your homework before flying your pet outside the U.S. Information on traveling with pets throughout the European Union, for example, can be found at [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk). If you're thinking about having a microchip ID implanted in your pet, check with your destination country's embassy to find out which chips are recognized there. Ask, too, about any regulations governing transport of animals into the country. Dr. Beaver recommends bringing a copy of the pet's rabies vaccination certificate on any foreign trip.

**Check on the FBO.** If you plan on spending any time at the airport with your pet before or after a flight, ask your crew about rules at the FBO (ground-service support facility). Some don't allow pets inside their buildings, while others are very pet-friendly. First Aviation Services at New Jersey's Teterboro Airport, for example, offers a private dog run complete with a fire hydrant.

"When it was a sleepy airport, I used to walk my dog out in between the taxicabs," said First Aviation Services founder Florence Ritorto, who brings her Greyhound, Mocha, with her to the



**A Business Jet Center employee at Dallas Love Field offers an airplane-shaped biscuit to a passenger's dog.**

airport each day. "But now with so many aircraft, you can't really walk behind them." □

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## Where's Fido?

When you arrive at your destination, it's important to keep an eye—and preferably, a leash—on your pet. After a long confinement onboard, it's not unheard of for a dog to take off through the gate and disappear. Then what would you do?

Many veterinarians offer a procedure costing less than \$100, wherein a microchip containing a unique electronic identification code is inserted under the pet's skin. If the pet ever runs away and is later brought to a veterinarian or animal shelter, its identity number can be retrieved from the microchip via a scan. The number can then be entered into a database of registered pets, which would reveal your contact information and most likely lead to a happy reunion. Several companies manufacture these chips and scanners, including AVID ([www.avidmicrochip.com](http://www.avidmicrochip.com)), Home Again ([www.homeagainid.com](http://www.homeagainid.com)) and Pet-ID ([www.petid.com](http://www.petid.com)).

Many animal care providers and shelters use scanners that can read a variety of chips that emit signals of the same frequency, typically 125 kHz. There are also 134.2 kHz chips that are ISO-certified and recognized outside the U.S. —M.S.