

Pets . . . to go

By Bennett Leigh

Our pets these days are much like family, so when it comes time to move to a new duty station, you should arrange for your pet's transportation needs with the same care and attention you put into your other moving plans. First and foremost, make sure your pets have current vaccination tags and identification information on their collars. Put your cell phone number on the tag if you plan to keep that number—this makes it a little easier if you may lose your pet en route. Keep a current photo of your pet with you, along with their vaccination and vet records. If traveling by plane, make reservations as soon as possible. You will need an approved airline carrier, which you can find at most pet stores or installation exchanges. Be sure to put your name, address and phone number (or a point of contact) on and in the carrier.

Begin coordinating with the airlines early so you know exactly what they require. Do keep in mind that shipping pets on an airline may be restricted during certain parts of the year, to include extreme cold or warm weather periods. Each airline carrier has its own rules regarding this issue. Let the airline carrier know you are in the military, as some airlines may offer a discount on your pet fare charges.

Boarding

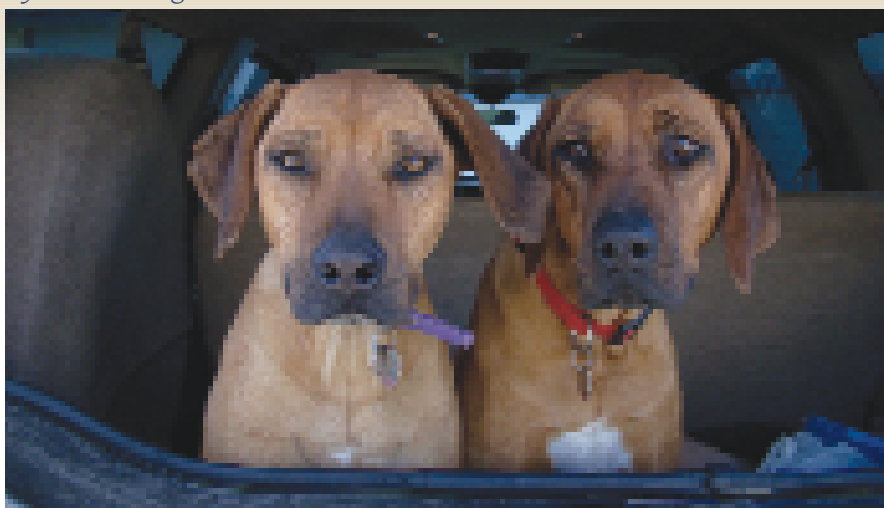
Remember that pets are not permitted in most installation lodging facilities, so you'll need to make arrangements for boarding. You can choose to board your pet(s) or you may want to find a pet-friendly hotel or motel. It is advised to call ahead and check, even if a hotel is listed as pet-friendly on a website.

Immunizations and Vets

Some places require licensing and even microchipping of your pet. Some require annual rabies vaccinations, while others require a three-year vaccination. It is advised to take pets to installation vets, if at all possible—the cost savings can be significant for vaccinations. But do find a local vet in your new location as well, as most military veterinary offices do not offer emergency or surgical options.

Moving Day

As a good owner, you must look out for the health and welfare of your adopted pets. Understand that some pets are not good travelers. For example, it may be wiser to sell your aquarium and fish and start all over again at your destination



Some pets love to travel, but you still need to prepare for the big move. Photo by Jennifer G. Williams

Many pets are very sensitive to changes in their environments. When dogs and cats sense stress, they can become alarmed, run away, become unruly, start wetting the carpet, etc. It is important to try to keep their routine consistent as much as possible in the days leading to the move: feeding schedules, walks, etc. You may choose to board them for packing and moving days.

- In the car, make sure they have a favorite toy or blanket. If flying, line their kennels with old blankets or clothing that "smell familiar" or have your scent on them.
- Contact your veterinarian for a complete checkup and a certification of health. Make sure that inoculations are up to date, and carry the papers with you. Make sure that any prescribed medications are in abundant supply in order to keep the pet comfortable. Depending on the pet, ask your vet to recommend a tranquilizer for the travel time.
- If you are planning to take pets in the car with you, be sure to have plenty of water and food for the pet. Make sure animal and bedding are free of fleas, ticks and other parasites. Also, be alert to the dangers of too hot or cold cars while the family is dining. Make sure pets get plenty of exercise at rest stops.
- Motion sickness pills usually need to be given 30 minutes before the trip starts.
- The first signs of carsickness are drooling, followed by restlessness and anxiety. Vomiting may occur. If you stop the car and let your dog out for some exercise, he'll feel better.
- Cats are usually frightened of car travel and may be more comfortable in a carrier.

- Portable kennels can be handy for overnight trips in a motel or hotel when you go out for dinner.
- Trim your pet's nails to prevent damage to car upholstery.
- Try not to leave a pet in a parked car—it may be illegal in some places. If you must, park the car in the shade and open all the windows an inch or two to get cross ventilation.
- Carry a room spray deodorant or air freshener. This can be important if your pet is in a motel overnight.
- *Never* put a pet in the trunk of a car—the temperature becomes extreme and the carbon monoxide will poison it. This is very important.
- Not all hotels and motels accept pets. Be sure to call ahead to find accommodations where your pet is welcome, too. Some larger motels even have nice kennel accommodations for the critters. Auto clubs and hotel/motel guides provide information on restrictions.
- If your pet will be traveling by airplane, be sure to call the airlines ahead of time and check on regulations for pet carrier size and construction. Some military flights allow pets. Check this with the installation transportation office.

Consider having your favorite kennel arrange for your animal's move. Then your pet can be boarded a few days ahead, and the kennel can arrange for transportation and care at both ends. ●

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