



Transporting your pet

RSPCA COMPANION ANIMALS PET CARE FACTSHEET



Under the Animal Welfare Act (of England & Wales) 2006 you have a duty of care to provide for the needs of your animal. Please bear this in mind when you make plans to travel.

You must take all reasonable steps to make sure that your pet is not transported in any way that causes, or is likely to cause him/her injury or unnecessary suffering. Always plan your journey carefully, taking into account your pet's needs.

If you have any doubt about whether your pet is fit and healthy to travel, seek advice from your vet.

Travelling in a car



It is important that you make sure that your pet is safe when transporting him/her in your car. Never leave your pet in a car on a warm or hot day. This can cause distress and suffering, and can lead to the death of your pet. See [Dogs die in hot cars](#) for more information.

Make sure your pet is secure and comfortable during the journey so that he/she doesn't distract you when you are driving, injure you or themselves if you have to stop quickly, and can't escape when you or your passengers exit the vehicle. Cats and small animals should be kept in a suitably robust and secure carrier (which allows them to sit and stand up at full height, turn around easily and lie down in a natural position). The carrier should be properly secured in the car to stop it moving about. For more information regarding dogs see [Safely transporting your dog in a car](#). Always make sure that your vehicle, and your pet's container is well ventilated and kept cool during the journey.



Pets can find travelling in a car a stressful experience. It may be beneficial to take them on short local journeys to get them used to the unfamiliar environment, sights, sounds and movement of the car before you go on holiday, and to check that they are happy with this type of transport. If your pet suffers from travel sickness, speak to your vet.

On long journeys you should:

- Always take plenty of water. Your pet should always have access to water during your journey;
- Feed your pet no sooner than two hours before you travel. Your pet will travel better if he/she does not have a full stomach. If your journey is long enough to cover a period of time in which your pet would normally be fed, remember to take your pet's food with you. Take a break to feed your pet a light meal and make sure your pet is allowed to rest and digest his/her food for two hours before continuing on your journey;
- Take regular breaks. Your pet should be allowed to exercise and go to the toilet at regular intervals. Cats and small animals should be given the chance to use a litter tray. Always make sure that all windows and doors are firmly closed and locked, whilst your cat is out of its carrier, to prevent him/her from escaping. Dogs should always be exercised on a lead, and you should make sure that they can't escape from the car as you go to get them out;
- Make sure you have fulfilled all the legal requirements of taking your pet abroad if your journey takes you out of the UK.



Travelling by train

Pets can find travelling on a train very stressful. It may be beneficial to take them on short local journeys to get them used to the unfamiliar environment, sights and sounds of the train station and the train, as well as the movement of the train itself before you go on holiday, and to check that they are happy with this type of transport.





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Make sure that you contact the rail company prior to arranging travel to check what their 'pet travel' policy is. Further information on transporting animals by train within the UK is available from [National Rail Enquires](#), and from [Eurotunnel](#) and [Eurostar](#) for travelling to and from Europe.

If you decide to use this method of transport you should:

- Travel during the coolest part of the day and when it is less busy e.g. leave first thing in the morning or later at night;
- Always make sure your pet is secure (i.e. keeping cats or small animals in a robust and suitable carrier which allows them to sit and stand up at full height, turn around easily and lie down in a natural position), and that they cannot escape;
- Make sure your pet is comfortable and has enough water;
- Make sure that there is enough ventilation for your pet, but always take great care to ensure that your pet cannot escape from his/her carrier;
- Always make sure that the train company officials know that you have a live animal and follow their instructions;
- Make sure you have fulfilled all the legal requirements of taking your pet abroad if your journey takes you out of the UK.



Travelling on a ferry

Make sure you contact the ferry company prior to arranging travel to find out what their 'pet travel' policy is. Animals other than registered assistance dogs are not allowed in passenger areas on most ferry trips, and passengers are not always allowed back to their cars during the journey. This will mean you may not be able to check on your pet during your ferry crossing. Depending on the length of your journey you may be required to place your pet in a container rather than leave them in the car. You should take all this into consideration when deciding to take your pet on a ferry.

If you decide to use this method of transport you should:

- Have your pet checked over by a vet before you travel.
- Never travel on a hot day, as leaving your animal in a car on a warm or hot day can cause distress and suffering and can lead to the death of your pet;
- Travel during the coolest part of the day and when it is less busy e.g. travel overnight, leave first thing in the morning or later at night;
- Always make sure your pet is secure (i.e. keeping cats or small animals in a robust and suitable carrier which allows them to sit and stand up at full height, turn around easily and lie down in a natural position), and that they cannot escape;
- Make sure your pet is comfortable and has enough water;
- Make sure that there is enough ventilation for your pet, but always take great care to ensure that your pet cannot escape from their carrier or your vehicle;
- Always make sure that the ferry company officials responsible for loading know that you have a live animal in your vehicle and follow their instructions;
- Make sure you have fulfilled all the legal requirements of taking your pet abroad if your journey takes you out of the UK (the Pet Travel Scheme provides details on approved sea transport companies).





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Air Travel

Long journeys including the flight, transportation to and from the aircraft and waiting times in the hold of an aircraft can be very stressful and distressing for pets. Apart from registered assistance dogs, animals cannot travel in the cabin of an aircraft with their owners and so will be transported in the hold. Although the hold is usually ventilated and temperature controlled, this may not be the case when the aircraft is on the ground. Delays can occur in flight times and regulations may not allow the hold to be opened on the tarmac, even during high temperatures. You should take all this into consideration when deciding to use this method of transport.

Make sure you contact the airline prior to arranging travel to find out what their 'pet travel' policy is. By law the [International Air Transport Association Live Animals Regulations](#) must be met in order to transport animals by plane. These specify standards such as the design, ventilation, and size of containers for transporting dogs and cats, and also arrangements for providing food and water. They also state that particular animals are not allowed to travel by plane.

When choosing to travel with your pet by plane you should:

- Have your pet checked over by a vet before you travel.
- Choose the most direct flight to your destination to reduce the travel time and stress on your pet;
- Travel during the coolest part of the day e.g. travel overnight, leave first thing in the morning or later at night;
- Where possible introduce your pet to a flight container before flights to give them a chance to become accustomed to the surroundings. Your airline should advise you on the type of container that you should use;
- Make sure your pet is comfortable;
- Make sure your pet is provided with water in a non-spill container that will last the length of the flight. Gelled water may be provided as a reserve;
- Make sure you have fulfilled all the legal requirements of taking your pet abroad if your journey takes you out of the UK (the Pet Travel Scheme provides details on approved air transport companies).



OTHER POSSIBLE LINKS:

- [Information on the Animal Welfare Act](#)
- [Pet care information](#)
- Information on how to [find a vet](#)
- [Defra advice](#) for travelling with your pets
- Information on [travelling with assistance dogs](#)

Links to the web pages of other organisations are provided for additional information only and do not imply any endorsement by the RSPCA of those organisations or of any content on the website.



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