



Trends in Pet Travel, Summer 2013



West Chelsea Veterinary Hospital's Top Tips on Obtaining Pet Certifications for Flying with Emotional Support Animals

Summer, we find, is the peak season for traveling with pets and it's likely because jetting with your pet means you'll never travel alone. Just like they do in our day-to-day lives, pets offer tremendous support. Under the title of "Emotional Support Animals," our pets can now, officially, offer their unconditional love and support while en route to new destinations.

However, preparation is necessary when traveling with family pets, particularly when flying. Did you know that West Chelsea's veterinarians are United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Accredited? They are, and our veterinarians and staff work closely with the USDA in preparing to-do lists and timelines of all that's needed for your pet to travel, as well as completing the appropriate travel paperwork. Our staff is happy to provide the required documentation and licenses to clients who are planning to travel with their pets both domestically and internationally. We're certified to provide the endorsements required by the USDA.



NOTE: Over the last few years, most countries have imposed stricter entry requirements on pet travel, usually requiring a USDA Health Certificate, blood testing for rabies antibodies or for the antibodies of other diseases and microchip identification. Many countries only accept a standard letterhead health certificate by a licensed veterinarian and sanctioned by the USDA. It's also very important to check the airline you'll be flying with your pet. There have been cases where a country does not require a certification, but a particular airline does. Travel permits and certificates are valid for limited time periods, so it's necessary to ensure your pet's travel paperwork and documentation is up to date.

Traveling with Emotional Support Animals (ESA)

As an animal lover, you've likely experienced the unconditional love of a dog (or also a cat!). In that case, it would likely be hard to dispute that they provide incredible love and comfort, especially to people suffering from anxiety or depression. Emotional Support Animals (ESA) provide significant assistance to those suffering from emotional discomfort and psychiatric disorders. To officially travel with an Emotional Support Animal, the pet must support the traveler in a medical capacity, but it is not required to undergo any training to become an ESA. While under

normal circumstances a pet would have to travel in a carrier under the seat, thanks to a 2003 guideline set forth by the Department of Transportation, Emotional Support Animals can now sit on their owner's lap, except when the size of a dog is prohibitive.

Emotional Support Animals are not to be confused with Service Animals, who go through a special training and wear a garment that designates their capacity.

How to Fly with An Emotional Support Animal

In order to fly with an Emotional Support Animal in the cabin of the aircraft with you, you will need a special letter within one year of the scheduled initial flight date from a licensed mental health professional (psychiatrist, psychologist or licensed clinical social worker) or a medical doctor specifically treating your mental or emotional condition. You can ask your doctor or current mental health professional for a letter on the practice's letterhead stating that you have a mental health-related condition that substantially limits a major life activity, like flying on an aircraft. The doctor should include in the letter a statement about the necessity of your Emotional Support Animal being in your presence as part of your treatment. This is a requirement put in place by the Department of Transportation for all people traveling by air with Emotional Support Animals.

If you have an Emotional Support Animal with the proper documentation and they are wearing service-appropriate apparel, then making reservations and taking your pet with you in the cabin of the aircraft can be a simpler, lower stress experience.



To learn more about the veterinary requirements for traveling with your pet or what to request from a healthcare professional to fly with an Emotional Support Animal, reach out to us at:

(212) 645-2767.

