

Hit the road with your pet

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More people seem to be traveling with their pets today, says Dr. Lou Kurzeja, veterinarian at Golf Rose Animal Hospital in Schaumburg. Whether for a weekend getaway or a long vacation, animal owners are reluctant to leave their friends behind. "I'm more comfortable with my animals with me and many of my clients are, too," she says.

Tim Anders would agree. He and

his wife, Dominique, rarely travel without their dog, Wrigley. Former residents of Schaumburg, the Anders now live in California, but travel to the Chicago suburbs often to see family with their dog named for the Cub's ballpark.

"We've only had good experiences," says Anders.

A terrier mix who weighs in at about 11 pounds, Wrigley rides in his soft carrier that fits under the seat of an aircraft cabin. "The only time he doesn't travel with us is when it's cheaper to board him," says Anders, who has paid \$100 each way on American Airlines for Wrigley to tag along. Fees charged by the airlines to travel with a pet have gone up, he says, and because a pet carrier counts as carry-on luggage, it limits what a passenger can bring on board.

Plan ahead

Whether traveling by air or car, pet owners should take the time to thoroughly plan their trip, says Dr. Kimberly May, assistant director for professional and public affairs at the American Veterinary Medical Association, or AVMA, based in

Schaumburg. "Being unprepared is their biggest mistake." The AVMA provides answers to frequently asked questions about pet travel on its Web site (www.avma.org/animal_health/travelingwithpet-faq.asp#plane).

Pets need to have complete identification on their collars and carriers, and Dr. May highly recommends having a microchip implanted in a pet that contains identification and health information. "Microchip your pet and keep the information up to date in the database. This is huge."

If your pet takes medication, have plenty with you, says Dr. May, and write down the contact information for animal hospitals en route and at your destination (search at <http://acvecc.org>). "Special needs pets require special planning," she says.

Bring along your pet's vaccination record. An animal first-aid kit is also good to have on hand, along with its leash, favorite toys, food and dishes. A current health certificate is required for any pet crossing state lines. Most airlines require a certificate issued within 10 days of travel. Some countries, as well as the state of Hawaii,



COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Animals should be restrained when riding in a car.



COURTESY OF TIM ANDERS

Tim and Dominique Anders rarely leave Wrigley at home when they travel. He flies in a soft carrier in the passenger cabin.

See **TRAVEL** on **PAGE 4**

Travel: Choose right carrier for your pet

Continued from page 3

may quarantine animals on arrival. If traveling to a foreign destination, contact that country's consulate regarding bringing your pet along.

Tranquilizing your pet

When obtaining a health certificate from your veterinarian, ask about giving a tranquilizer to your pet to ease the stress of travel, says Dr. May. "Work with them to get the right dosage." It's not for every pet, she says, particularly pugs and other short-nose breeds that may have difficulty breathing when sedated.

Owners often make the mistake of feeding their pet just before travel, says Dr. Kurzeja. "Letting them fly or take a drive on an empty tummy is OK. The stress from leaving the daily routine can cause an upset tummy." Dramamine, the over-the-counter motion-sickness remedy for people, may also be given to some pets. "It stops their urge to

vomit," she says. Dr. Kurzeja recommends one 50mg chewable tablet given on an empty stomach to a dog over 25 pounds, a half tablet for a smaller dog and a quarter tablet for a cat. She also has prescribed Valium for pets before travel.

Anders prefers to give Wrigley a natural herbal remedy that he buys at his pet store and he does not give him food or water for two or three hours before travel.

Choose a pet carrier that's well ventilated and leakproof. It must be large enough for the animal to stand without touching the top, turn around, sit erect and lie down in a natural position. Check with airlines about the size of carriers allowed on board. Any carrier should display identification prominently. If placed in an aircraft cargo hold, it should also include your destination address, be labeled "Live Animal" and have an arrow indicating its upright position.

Traveling by air

The risk to animals is higher when traveling in the cargo hold of the aircraft than in the passenger compartment. "I try to avoid it if at all possible. It is more of a stress on the animal," says Dr. Kurzeja. Also, she personally knows of two pets that were lost when traveling in cargo.

Because airlines restrict the number of animals in the passenger compartment, as well as the size of their carriers, pet owners may have few other options, though Dr. Kurzeja says she has heard good things about Pet Airways (petairways.com). On the pets-only airline, animals travel in the main compartment and are attended at all times.

If your pet must fly in cargo, choose a nonstop flight and avoid busy times, such as during holidays when cargo holds may be full. When traveling in warm weather, fly early or late in the day when it's coolest. In



COURTESY OF PET AIRWAYS

Animals fly in carriers in the main cabin of Pet Airways and are attended at all times.

cold weather, travel midday when it is warmest. Do not put food in the carrier, but include water in a container that won't spill, such as a licker bottle.

Contact the airline to reserve space for your pet and inquire about restrictions and

See **TRAVEL** on **PAGE 6**

Travel: Cats should ride in a carrier

Continued from page 4

fees. Some airlines will not accept short-nose dogs during summer. Some exotic animals and tropical birds, such as parrots, may not be allowed in the cabin. There will be rules regarding the minimum age and weaning of the animal. Fees for transporting pets vary by airline as well as by the months of travel, whether in cargo or the cabin and whether flying domestically or internationally. On United Airlines, for example, fees range from \$125 to \$500 each way (www.united.com/page/article/0,6867,51255,00.html).

Traveling by car

Veterinarians say animals should never ride in a car with their head sticking out the window because it could cause damage to their eyes. "Sticking their little noses out is fine, but having their whole head out — which they love — is not fine," says Dr. Kurzeja.

The back seat is best for an animal and pet safety belts, available online or in pet stores, are a good idea if they fit properly. Cats should always ride in a carrier. Pets should be restrained

inside a vehicle so they don't roam and distract the driver or interfere with the brake or accelerator. They should never ride in an open truck bed unless in a securely attached kennel.

Plan pet exercise and potty breaks every two to three hours.

Choosing a hotel

If a hotel claims to be pet-friendly, check it out. Some limit the size of a pet and the number of pets per room and will assign them only to smoking rooms. Some charge no fee for pets, others may charge anywhere from \$10 to \$75 or require a cleaning deposit.

Some hotels require that a pet never be left unattended. At others, it's a good idea to place the "do not disturb" sign on the door if you must leave the room.

Dr. Kurzeja has had good luck staying at La Quinta hotels with her pets. "They are enthusiastic about dogs," she says.

To find a pet-friendly hotel, visit petswelcome.com and pets-allowed-hotels.com.