

# Shipping Puppies

There are many challenges a breeder faces when breeding a litter of puppies. From my own personal experience I have found that it is one of my biggest concerns and I am sure I am not alone when it comes time to ship our most precious cargo. As breeders we have spent time researching pedigrees to find the best suitable combination. Have raised the pups from infancy, hours have gone into socializing them, and interviewing prospective homes and then in an instant we lose all control when we put our babies on a commercial carrier to send them to their new homes. The best case scenario is if your puppy buyers can fly to you to pick up their pups. I will touch on additional helpful hints on how to fly with your pup in cabin or in cargo as excess baggage later in this article. However, much of the information provided for shipping the pup as cargo can be used when the puppy is being flown in cabin or as excess baggage.

To prepare my puppies for their long journey and a new life I begin to train them to accept being kenneled. Depending upon the size of the litter at 5.5 weeks the pups are either all kenneled at the same time or take turns being kenneled in their puppy pen while some of their siblings are able to walk around. I start when they have already had a full day, their bellies are full, and they are ready to settle down. In most cases I will begin by having a pair of pups sleep together for awhile (usually in a larger kennel) and gradually separate them until they are comfortable sleeping independently. Some puppies are more accepting than others. Once I know that they are comfortable in a kennel I begin to drive them around on very short trips. Depending upon the size of the litter this is done every day or every other day from 6 to 8 weeks in individual kennels and usually in the same kennels they will be shipped in. Each day the pups experience a longer trip in the kennel so that by the time they go to their new homes they are comfortable settling quickly and have learned to accept their kennel. In cases where a single puppy has problems settling on car rides, I will take that puppy by himself so not influence the rest of them.

In most cases my puppies leave here between eight and nine weeks. Requirements for shipping through the airlines are:

- Animals must be at least 8 weeks of age.
- Shipping kennel or cage must meet standards for size, ventilation, strength and design. Animals must have enough room to stand up and turn around. Kennels must be equipped with one food and water cup. Kennels must be marked with shipper's name, address and phone number and pick-up person's name, address and phone number (if different from shipper), Live Animal Stickers should be applied to the kennel and the last time fed and watered indicated. Place newspaper or absorbent material on the bottom of the crate. **TIP\*\*** I use puppy pee pads and towels that the littermates have slept on.
- Animal may not be exposed to temperatures of less than 45 degrees Fahrenheit unless there is an acclimation statement by a Veterinarian.
- Health Certificate must be issued by a licensed Veterinarian and be no more than 10 days old. **TIP\*\*** Travel within the same state may not require a health certificate. Check with your carrier.
- Animals may not be brought to the airline more than 4 hours before a flight.
- Animals less than 16 weeks of age must be offered food and water if transit is more than 12 hours. Older animals must have food at least every 24 hours and water at least every 12 hours.

- Animals over 16 weeks must have rabies shots current.

**TIP\*\*** Pricing is dependent on the weight of your pet, the volume of the crate (length X width X height), and the total weight of pet and crate. Most airlines use a formula to calculate price based on these numbers. Often, the crate size can change the price dramatically. Remember, crate size is based on measured numbers, NOT the company sizes. A PetCo medium crate will be a different size from a Dog.com medium crate. So find the best size for shipping your puppies that will accommodate your puppy and airline requirements but will be most cost effective. And buy the plastic dishes to go with the crate. Most airlines require them to be attached to the door. I usually buy extras because they can get lost when the kennel is returned to me.

**TIP\*\*** Small kennels can be returned to you by the puppy buyer by simply attaching a label with your address on it and sent through the USPS. They do not need to be broken down as long as they are within the normal shipping sizes and weights for the postal service. I send the buyer premade labels in my puppy packet that is mailed separately before the puppy is shipped.

**TIP\*\*** It takes a dog approximately 3 hours to process food. That means he'll have to eliminate about 3 hours after you feed him. Use this to plan his meal before his flight. The airline does not let your dog out of the crate for breaks.

**TIP\*\*** The night before I ship a puppy I freeze water in the cups that attach to the kennel. Just before leaving the puppy at the airport I attach the frozen cups to the door of the kennel. This way the pup will have water as it melts without it spilling all over the place. I also fly each puppy with a toy that has the scent of his littermates on it.

**TIP\*\*** I drill 4 small holes in the front of the kennel (two on each side) so that I can pass zip ties through the holes and through the wires in the kennel door. The zip ties I use are the easy release kind but they give an added amount of security to that the door cannot just open by mistake. I place one zip tie in each corner.

**TIP\*\*** During very hot weather plan to ship your puppies when the temperatures are the coolest for departures and arrivals.

**TIP\*\*** Never sedate a puppy for flying. Most puppies will fall to sleep naturally.

**TIP\*\*** Make sure to take the booking information to the airport with you. I ran into a problem recently where they couldn't find the reservation because the agent who booked the flight entered the incorrect date. Have the AWB# with you for verification.

Living in Juneau, Alaska has its own unique set of challenges. The only way in or out of here is by boat or plane. It takes 2.5 days by boat to reach Seattle. As for air travel there is only one airline that flies into this city and unless a puppy buyer lives near Seattle in most cases the pup will have to change planes before reaching his final destination. Depending upon the situation he may also change airline carriers and have to overnight in Seattle. For obvious reasons you want to avoid plane changes and pick the most direct route with the shortest amount of time the pup will be in the air.

In cases where the puppy has to change planes using the same carrier there is a required 4 hour layover between flights. The company will move the puppy for you and the cost of shipping is one price. For cases where you need to use two separate air companies, check to see if they will move the puppy or if you will need a courier to do this. If there isn't a connection until the following morning the puppy will have to spend the night at a kennel that does business with the airline or someone you know can pick the puppy up and return to the airport the next day. In cases where the pup will spend the night at a kennel the cost to fly will remain the same but you will also have to pay for the kennel reservation. Keep in mind that if the puppy stays at a kennel facility he will have to meet all the vaccination requirements (including bordetella and rabies). If you plan to have someone you know pick the pup up for the night and return the next day, plan to pay for both legs of the trip. At the time you make reservations make sure you book both legs.

If you feel that you are not good at doing the research to find the best flights for your puppies a good resource is Atwood's Pet Transport. Lee Atwood has been making arrangements for transporting dogs for many years and knows the best flights and connections. Here is the website <http://www.animalsanywhere.com/>

For me whether the flight is short or long I am a wreck!!! until I hear that the puppy has arrived safely and is in the arms of their new owner.

Flying a puppy as excess baggage where the puppy is in the cargo hold has similar requirements as puppies flying by themselves. Really the only difference here is that the puppy is accompanied by their human and is checked through the airport terminal instead of cargo. The puppy's kennel will have to be inspected by TSA and the puppy itself may be gone over before boarding the aircraft. When flying with a dog when I walk onto the aircraft I let the agent in the front cabin know where I sit and that I am travelling with my pet. I ask them to let me know when the dog has been boarded. Most airlines today have you fill out a voucher that is returned to you once the dog has been loaded. I also reserve a window seat on the right hand side of the plane so I can watch the dog being boarded. Generally pets are the last to go onto the plane and should be the first to be taken off. When you are changing planes and you have a long wait between flights you can ask to pick up your dog to take for a potty break. Most airlines require that you have the dog back to them 2 hours prior to take off. Make sure that you carry a leash that is easily accessible.

Flying a puppy in cabin in a soft carrier has a different set of problems. Make sure that you know the dimensions of the pet carrier that will fit under the seat. Belgian puppies at 8 weeks may already be too big to fly in cabin in the required dimensions of the soft carrier. If you run into a problem make sure you have a plan "B" to go with. Your puppy will have to remain in the bag throughout the entire trip. Make sure to line the carrier with pee pads. On long trips I pack a portable fan that I can set facing the puppy on the floor of the aircraft. Make sure to carry extra water and handy wipes. If you have a plane change you can take your puppy into a "family" bathroom at the airport and put a pee pad down on the floor. If you are lucky your puppy will sleep through most of the flight.

Pet Airways <http://www.petairways.com> is a new pet carrier that breeders have had success flying their puppies. All dogs are in cabin with an agent onboard to check on them.

I have not flown any puppies into Canada but have heard that there are new regulations and fees to pay. A good resource for information is the Canadian Food Inspection Agency – Importing Domestic Dogs. Here is the link to the website. <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/imp/petani/canine.shtml>

Flying a dog to Europe? Check out this website.  
[http://www.pettravel.com/passports\\_USDA\\_certification.cfm](http://www.pettravel.com/passports_USDA_certification.cfm)

© Susan Hoffman 2015