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Press Release

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Tips for Shipping Your Pet This Summer

HEIDELBERG, GE - The Installation Management Agency – Europe is gearing up for the high volume of Soldiers and families leaving Europe this summer. In addition to your family members and household goods, making the proper arrangements for your pets is key to a successful move.

Following these tips will assure an easier move for your pets:

Plan Ahead.

Ensure your pet's vaccinations and health records are up to date. All pets require a health certificate that is less than 10-days old at the time of flight as well as a current rabies vaccination that is at least 30-days old, but not older than one year. For animals not old enough to be immunized for rabies prior to travel, you should obtain a memorandum from the veterinarian waiving this requirement. It is also very important to have at least two copies of your orders -- it will help speed your pet through customs – as well as a complete contact address and phone number in the U.S. It is also important to ask your sponsor or point of contact at your next duty station if any additional local or national pet restrictions apply.

Make Reservations.

Contact your local commercial travel office (SatoTravel) to make travel reservations for your pet and all members of your household after you receive Permanent Change Station (PCS) orders and have a confirmed household goods pick-up date. U.S. air carrier websites provide information on rules, policies and procedures for pet travel on the aircraft. The information is general and subject to changes.

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Shipping your pet

Be prepared.

Shipping a pet can be expensive. All costs associated with shipping pets are the responsibility of the pet owner. Ensure shipping kennels or cages meet standards for size, ventilation, strength and design. Animals must have enough room to stand up and turn around and each species must have its own kennel with the exception of compatible cats and dogs of similar size. When in doubt, use a larger kennel. Dogs and cats must be at least eight weeks old and must be weaned before traveling by air.

Instructions for feeding and providing water to the animal over a 24-hour period must be attached to the kennel. The 24-hour schedule will assist the airline in providing care for your animal in case it is diverted from its original destination. You, as a pet owner, are required to certify your pet had been offered food and water within four hours of transport, and the documentation must include the time and date of feeding. Food and water dishes must be securely attached and be accessible to caretakers without opening the kennel. Food and water must be provided to puppies and kittens every 12 hours if they are eight to 16 weeks old. Mature animals must be fed every 24 hours and given water every 12 hours.

Be Aware.

Restrictions on shipping pets are established to ensure animals are not exposed to extreme hot or cold temperatures. Restrictions can apply at originating, connecting, or terminating airport locations. You will be notified in advance if a restriction applies. If a restriction is enforced, your pet may not be able to fly on your scheduled flight. Your pet may be re-routed to another airport or held over until weather conditions at the origin or destination improve. Please understand that this is done to protect the welfare of your pet. Have a back-up plan just in case.

Commercial Pet Shippers.

An alternate option is to ship your pet through a commercial animal shipper. These companies have been around for decades and specialize in pet shipping. They offer daily departures, same day arrivals, boarding service, daily flights to over 200 U.S. airports, and kennels available in various sizes. The cost is more expensive; however, they can normally ship your pet when restrictions are enforced by the airlines.

There is no military entitlement to ship pets home when it is time to PCS. It is the responsibility of the member to make arrangements and pay for the shipping costs.

Please see the USAREUR Customs web site for more information

(<http://www.hqusareur.army.mil/opm/pets.htm>), or contact your local veterinary detachment office for more details.

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Shipping your pet

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SHIPPING PETS TO THE U.S.

Q. Will the government pay to ship my pet?

A. No. The member is responsible for arranging and paying all costs associated with shipping pets.

Q. Can my pet and I travel on the same aircraft?

A. Yes, unless pet spaces are full or a heat restriction is issued by your airline. Restrictions are established to protect the health of your pet during extreme hot or cold temperatures. If a heat embargo is issued, your pet may be restricted from flying until conditions improve or re-routed on another airplane. Pet owners are normally given advanced notice of any restrictions.

Q. What if my pet cannot be reserved on my flight?

A. Due to the busy summer travel season, pet spaces on your scheduled flight may not be available. If so, the commercial travel office (SATO) will try to book your pet on another flight or airline. Remember any costs incurred for shipping your pet is a member responsibility.

Q. Must I go through the commercial travel office to ship my pet?

A. Using the commercial travel office to ship your pet is convenient but not the only option available. There are commercial pet shipping companies that specialize in shipping pets. The cost is more expensive, but they can normally ship your pet when other airlines can't due to restrictions or non-availability. For a fee, they also offer pick-up services throughout Germany. The Soldier/family member will bear all costs and potential risks associated with using these companies. Contact your local transportation office or commercial travel office for a list of potential sources.

Q. What documentation is required to ship my pet to the U.S.?

A. The original and one copy of a health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian stating that the animal is healthy enough to travel by air and is free of injury and disease. The certificate must be dated 10-days or less from the date your animal will be shipped. A rabies vaccination certificate issued and signed by a licensed veterinarian at least 30-days old but not older than one year from the date your animal will be shipped is required. If your pet is less than 12 weeks old you should obtain a memorandum from a licensed veterinarian that waives the rabies requirement.

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Shipping your pet

Q. There are no veterinary facilities at my installation. Can I get shots and travel papers from vets on the local economy? Are such shot and other records recognized by U.S. officials back in the States?

A. You can use the services of host nation veterinarians. They're familiar with international standards of pet immunization and shipment. Host nation vets know that you need a health certificate and current rabies vaccination. In some cases, the health certificate and rabies vaccination will be on the same form. In other cases, they will be given to you as separate certificates. In either case, they will be recognized by health officials at your stateside destination.

Q. I have heard that some airlines will not accept a pet in a collapsible kennel. Is this true?

A. Yes. Collapsible or foldable kennels are prohibited by most airlines. The kennel used to ship your pet must meet USDA guidelines for size, ventilation, strength and design. Animals must have enough room to stand up and turn around and each species must have its own kennel with the exception of compatible cats and dogs of similar size. When in doubt use a larger kennel. A contact address and phone number in the states, and two copies of your orders to help speed your pet through customs.

Q. What are the feeding instructions for my pet?

A. Call or visit your airlines website for feeding instructions. Most airlines and pet shipping companies require a 24-hour feeding schedule to be attached to the kennel. This feeding schedule will assist the airline in providing care for your animal in case it is diverted from its original destination. You, as a pet owner, are required to certify your pet had been offered food and water within four hours of transport, and the documentation must include the time and date of feeding. Food and water dishes must be securely attached and be accessible to caretakers without opening the kennel. Food and water must be provided to puppies and kittens every 12 hours if they are eight to 16 weeks old. Mature animals must be fed every 24 hours and given water every 12 hours.

Q. My family and I bought a new puppy and he's two weeks old today. Is he old enough to fly?

A. Not yet. Your pet must be at least 8-weeks old and weaned before traveling by air.

Q. How do I find additional information on shipping pets?

A. There are great Internet sites that provide tips and information on pet shipping. In addition, each airline has rules, policies, and procedures for shipping pets. It would be beneficial to visit your air carrier's website prior to shipping your pet.