PCSing and Peeved Pets

Dear

You’ve just received PCS orders, effective in 6 weeks. It’s difficult enough to organize yourself, your partner, and your kids, but what about if you have pets?

Read on for a step-by-step checklist of things to do to help make your relocation as smooth as possible for your furry friends.

According to research published in 1999 by the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy, moving is identified as the most common of 71 reasons for relinquishing dogs and the third most common reason for relinquishing cats to shelters

http://www.petpopulation.org/topten.html

Landlord issues cited as 2nd most common reason for relinquishing dogs, and 5th most common for cats.

. In addition, when citing moving as the reason for giving up their pets, 38.8 percent of dog owners and 38.1 percent of cat owners cited the refusal of a landlord to allow the animal in an apartment or house.

The most important thing any pet owner can do before moving with their pets is “plan, plan, plan,” says Stephen Zawistowski, Ph.D., senior vice president of ASPCA Animal Sciences. “For something like this, Geri, I recommend a professional pet transport company. These companies are familiar with the regulations regarding vaccinations and veterinary certificates for entering Italy with your dog. You can ask your veterinarian for a recommendation, check the yellow pages, or search online. When you contact the company, ask for references from past customers to ensure its reliability and safety.”

Moving is very stressful for a family,” say ASPCA President Larry Hawk, D.V.M. “That stress is also experienced by the pets. They want to know that they’re part of the family and that they’ll be going, too.”

Pet Health Check: Fit to travel?

Pet Records: Vaccination papers, copy of health records,

Pet Transportation:

Pets in a safe location on moving day

Necessary Items For The Trip: Toys, treats, food, water, leash, bowls, trash bags, first aid kit

1. Check base policy regarding number of pets, microchip policy, etc. – base veterinary clinic

Hawaii quarantine $1000

Book pets on the freedom bird

Long distance moves are stressful for all family members, including pets. So it always pays to plan ahead. Reduces the emotional stress. Most Americans consider their pets as family members, so it stands to reason that we should do everything possible to ensure their comfort and safety during a relocation.

**Pre-Planning**

<http://www.petswelcome.com/milkbone/petmvframe.html>

This is the key to an easier transfer, regardless of the mode of transportation chosen. Travel arrangements should be completed as far in advance of moving day as is practical, keeping departure day tasks to a minimum. One person in the family should assume responsibility for the pet. Be sure to discuss the transfer of your pet with your travel agent. Your agent can help you select the best way to transfer your pet, offer helpful suggestions, and assist with, or take care of, any necessary shipping arrangements. The agent may recommend a pet handling agency that will take care of all the details of shipping pets, including boarding, pick-up, and delivery. Costs vary according to services rendered.

**General Checklist**

1. Take pet to veterinarian for checkup and health documentsapply for entry permit if one is needed; inquire about sedation for pet; obtain pet’s health record; schedule second visit to vet if necessary; ask your vet to recommend a colleague in the new city.
2. Obtain travel identification tag.
3. Check destination state’s pet entry regulations.
4. **Health Certificate:**
	1. Interstate health certificates must accompany dogs and horses entering nearly all states. About half have the same requirement for cats, birds and other pets. In some cases, advance receipt of the health certificate by the destination state’s regulatory agency is a prerequisite to entry of the pet.
	2. The health certificate must include a complete description of the pet, list all inoculations it has had, and state that it is free from infectious diseases.
	3. Have your pet examined by your veterinarian well in advance of departure date so there will be time for any treatment or inoculations recommended. Another examination just prior to departure may be necessary. If the pet is excitable, or prone to motion sickness when traveling, ask the vet to prescribe medication for it. Also ask if a colleague in your new area can be recommended.
* **Check airlines pet flying policies and prices.** Even though the military arranges your flight, if you are going overseas, check beforehand, which airport is closest to your destination and which airlines are most pet friendly. Consistently, I heard plugs for United and Lufthansa. We flew United in the middle of a hot summer and the pets were fine, because all of United’s planes are temperature controlled. Many of the others are not and have restrictions on when you can fly pets. Also check those prices. A friend was charged what must’ve been the cargo freight fee for her two medium sized dogs…yep, over $2,000. We were only charged $310 for a cat and a large 100 lb dog (with a 50 lb grande size kennel). That broke down into the cat flying for $105 and the dog for $205 one way.
* **Visit the airline’s pet travel webpage.** Each airline has a page…or group of pages on their requirements for pet air travel. If you can’t find it in writing, then ask about it. For example, I called the airline to make sure this super giant dogcrate would fit on the plane. The reservationist was actually able to look up the airplane type and what size crates would fit. Not all planes fit all size crates, and if you are stuck on a plane that is too small, you risk the chance of having to ship your pet air freight which equals $$$$$$…..or leaving your pet behind.
* **Make sure your pet’s travel information is in your PNR.** As soon as you get your reservation, call the airline and make sure your pets and what crate models you have, are noted in your record. Planes can only take a certain number of pets per plane, and you don’t want any mistakes on crate sizes vs plane cargo hold space. Most airlines only allow two pets per passenger cabin (more in the cargo hold), so make sure that is noted as well if that’s what you plan to do. I knew someone who showed up at the airport and was denied boarding her pet because two other passengers had their pets noted in their records. Because of some kind of oversight, her kitty was not. This brings me to my next point.
* **Have back up arrangements for your pet.**Things can go wrong at the airport or with your family or with your schedule. I knew someone who last year had a dog and crate who were five pounds over the limit, and they would not allow the dog to board. She was also traveling with a little dog and four kids! Since she had planned ahead, she was able to give the dog to a friend…who was helping them at the airport at check in…and made arrangements for her to ship the dog at a later date…after he was put on a little diet.
* **Tape a cheap leash and a photo of your pet to the top of its crate.**You never know when there might be delays and a sympathetic airline employee might take out your pet. Also, if your pet somehow escapes, they will at least know what he looks like.
* **Tape a ziploc bag of one food portion to the top of the crate.** I chose not to feed my pets…so they wouldn’t have to go to the bathroom. They won’t totally starve by missing one meal. But let’s say there are major delays. You don’t want your pets going too long without food.

**If you have a litter box trained cat, plan for your sponsor or someone on the receiving end to have a litterbox and litter ready for you.** My husband didn’t…think he was too embarrassed. We got to Frankfurt airport, and the poor cat refused to go to the bathroom at the airport on a plot of grass or at our first highway rest stop. Of course, the dog had no issues with this. After a three hour drive to our destination, my husband had to run and buy the goods, brought the stuff to the hotel and the cat….it was truly a sight to see…jumped in there and must’ve scratched for a full minute, eyes wide, meowing to no end….before finally going….poor thing. I don’t think he’s ever not gone in a litterbox and probably never will!

It can be easy to forget about pets in the course of preparing for and making a move, but it always pays to plan ahead. Above all, remember to do the following:

* Make arrangements for transportation well in advance.
* Find out about any rules or regulations regarding pets in your new home and community. Many states have their own unique laws concerning pets, and you may need extra documentation in some cases.
* Have your pet checked over by a veterinarian before you move, and get all necessary health records and certificates. Your pet's health certificate should include a complete description of the pet, a list of all inoculations, and a statement that it is free from infectious diseases.
* Carry health and rabies certificates with you.
* Ask about vaccinations needed to travel to foreign countries.
* If your pet is excitable, or prone to motion sickness when traveling, ask your veternarian to prescribe medications.
* <a href="http://altfarm.mediaplex.com/ad/nc/13770-118592-3551-143?mpt=[CACHEBUSTER]"> <img src="http://altfarm.mediaplex.com/ad/nb/13770-118592-3551-143?mpt=[CACHEBUSTER]" alt="Click Here" border="0">< /a>

Attach an ID tag to your pet's collar. The tag should include the pet's name, your name and destination address, and the name and address of a person to contact in case you can't be reached. There are also other ways of identifying your pet, i.e. leg bands, brands (for horses), tattoos, color photos, and/or registration papers. The pet's health certificate can be used for identification.

* Basically, there are two ways in which you can transport your pet: (1) by air, with the pet either accompanying you, or traveling as air freight or (2) in your personal motor vehicle. Futher information on each of these options is included in this guide.
* Check on the type and size of kennel needed for overseas shipment of pets.
* If you're traveling across the country, you can check on pet-friendly hotels at [Petswelcome.com](http://www.petswelcome.com/).

You may have moved already since I've just joined, but I saw your question in the AF Times and wanted to respond with some information for future reference, or for anyone else considering Hawaii.

Hawaii is definately not out of the picture. As long as you plan ahead, and have at least 6 months notice (or someone willing to take care of your pets for awhile), you can take your pets to Hawaii and avoid quarantine through their direct release program. I did it with my two cats. There are several conditions that have to be met. First, the animal must have had 2 rabies vaccinations. Second, the animal must be microchipped. Third, a blood test must be sent to one of two special labs to test for rabies antibodies. This is where the time factor comes in. The animaml cannot enter the state of Hawaii until 4 months (maybe 6, not quite sure which one) has elapsed AFTER the lab receives the blood test. Finally, the animal must have a valid health certificate dated within 10 days of the animal entering the state. There are forms to fill out, and various fees (the blood test, the microchipping, processing fees that the quarantine center...they've got to make some money off you), but it's still ALOT better than the exhorbitant 4-6 month quarantine fees. When I did it, I didn't have enought time, and my parents kept my cats for me until they could enter the state. Go to Hawaii's Dept of Agriculture website (<http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/ai/aqs/info>) for more specifics.

As far as quarantine re-imbursement, I've heard the military is reimbursing up to a certain amount. So if for some reason your animal needs to spend a few days in quarantine because there is an issue with the paperwork, or not quite all of the requried waiting period has passed from submitting the blood test, you could get at least some of it back. I don't remember what the cap is though.

If you are concerned about your pet travelling unaccompanied, there are several pet moving companies available (just google the phrase, you'll be amazed at how many pop up). I hired one who made flight arrangements (airfare included in base price), picked up my cats from my parents, provided the right size and approved airline kennels (an optional extra fee), got them the health certificates (also an optional extra fee), took them to the airport, got them through security and checked in, would have had someone available to care for them at any layovers in case there was a delay for some reason, and finally, picked them up from the Honolulu airport and delivered them to my door (the last part was also an extra fee, but as there was the whole direct release thing to deal with, it was worth it to me to pay an extra fee to have someone do it who is familiar with the pick-up process). Yes, it was kind of expensive since I was doing it for two animals, but I knew my cats were safe, and it was better for them than languishing in quarrantine.

As far as driving, my cats have also driven with me from Maryland to Alaska, and Alaska to Georgia without incident. AAA guide books are great at identifing hotels that are pet friendly, and I never had a problem finding a place to stay that allowed pets. Sometimes I had to stay at places that were a little more expensive than I would have preferred, or there was an additional pet fee. Some places did have restrictions on dog size. The big hassle was unloading the car in the evening (and loading back up again the morning) with the overnight bag, the cat carrier, the cat food, the litter box, and the litter container! And I sometimes had a problem wrangling the cats back into the carrier the next morning as one liked to hide!!! 

I hope this information helps someone, and feel free to contact me with any additional questions.

The Government does not pay for PCS travel for Pets as they are technically not considered part of your family. If you PCS with a pet, you are personally and financially responsible for the movement. However, the JFTR does allow up to $550 for reimbursement for any quarantine related fees. Keep in mind that this $550 is a total figure and not per pet. I suggest you check with your TMO office with any other pet travel questions.

Home Remedies To Help Your Dog’s Itchy Skin

[http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/08/26/home-remedies-to-help-your-dog%e2%80%99s-itchy-skin/](http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/08/26/home-remedies-to-help-your-dog%E2%80%99s-itchy-skin/)

How To Care For Your Swimming Dog

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/08/18/how-to-care-for-your-swimming-dog/>

Should I Shave My Dog’s Coat In The Summer?

[http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/08/08/should-i-shave-my-dog%e2%80%99s-coat-in-the-summer/](http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/08/08/should-i-shave-my-dog%E2%80%99s-coat-in-the-summer/)

What To Do About Demodectic Mange

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/08/03/what-to-do-about-demodectic-mange/>

Why Does My Dog Constantly Lick His Paws?

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/07/26/why-does-my-dog-constantly-lick-his-paws/>

How To Choose The Best Dog Groomer

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/07/15/how-to-choose-the-best-dog-groomer/>

Pyoderma In Dogs

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/07/08/pyoderma-in-dogs/>

Hip Dysplasia In Dogs

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/07/01/hip-dysplasia-in-dogs/>

Removing And Preventing Ticks

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/06/20/removing-and-preventing-ticks/>

Does Your Dog Have Flea Allergy Dermatitis?

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/06/10/does-your-dog-have-flea-allergy-dermatitis/>

Fighting Fleas

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/06/01/fighting-fleas/>

Where Does All That Ear Discharge Come From?

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/05/26/where-does-all-that-ear-discharge-come-from/>

5 Things To Think About When Grooming An Older Dog

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/05/23/5-things-to-think-about-when-grooming-older-dogs/>

Natural Flea And Tick Prevention And Remedies

<http://happytailsspa-blog.com/2011/05/17/natural-flea-and-tick-prevention-and-remedies/>