



Holiday pet planning: don't fur-get to prepare!

Holidays are best when the whole family can get together and enjoy the trip, but what about those members of the family who walk on all fours and are covered with fur?

With the Christmas break just weeks away you may have considered taking your furry bundle of joy away with you on holidays. But have you put much thought into the logistics of travelling with your fluffy companion?

A good deal of preparation and planning is a must whenever you go on holiday, but if you have pets, your to-do list may be that much longer. If you take your furry friend away with you, you'll need to think of a pet-friendly destination and pack all the necessities. On the other hand you may opt to leave your fluffy family member in the care of someone else. Whatever you decide, you'll want to ensure that your four-legged friend will be protected. More to the point, will pet insurance cover your pets while you're away?

Natalie Ball, Director, Compareinsurance.com.au says:

"Leaving home without adequate insurance is always a mistake, but you'd be surprised at how many people neglect to check that their pets are covered when they go on holiday. Whether you're taking your pets overseas or simply on a road trip within your own state this Christmas, you need to make sure that they are comfortable and covered! Remember a dog is for life, not just for xmas!"

Travelling with pets: what you need to know

It's time to take paws for think; does pet insurance extend to cover away from home?

Just like you wouldn't confuse little Fido for a feline, you shouldn't take your pets away without the correct cover. So will your policy cover your cat or cavoodle for an overseas trip?

1300 insurance, Bupa, Medibank, Pet Insurance Australia, RACQ, Real Insurance, Petplan, Prosure, RSCPA and Woolworths will pay for pet expenses incurred for the treatment of your pet whilst they are overseas.

However the definition of 'overseas' is fairly limited. You will not be insured for any destinations where Australian quarantine regulations require your pet to be quarantined on its return. This brings the list of overseas destinations to just the Cocos Islands, New Zealand and Norfolk Island.

Policy restrictions also apply:

- You cannot go on long trips – most policies will restrict the length of time you can take your pet out of the country for. This is usually no more than 60 days.
- You may not be covered for emergency repatriation costs to return your pet home if they are sick or injured.
- You may not be able to claim for an incident that happened when your pet was not under direct care. You should nominate an authorised person to look after your pet whilst you are overseas that can speak to your insurer in case anything were to happen.

Agriculture.gov.au states: *When your cat or dog is exported from Australia it immediately loses its Australian health status. This means you might not be able to bring it back to Australia at short notice.*

Cats and dogs can only return to Australia from certain countries and, depending on the country, the pre-import preparation time, or time spent in quarantine, can be over six months. However, if you start preparations in Australia before you and your pet head overseas, returning them to Australia can be much simpler and quicker.

Cats and dogs may come into Australia from 'approved' countries. However, there are some countries that pups and cats cannot be brought from into Australia. These are referred to as 'non-approved' countries.

Non-approved Category 2 countries include: American Samoa, Bahrain, Barbados, Christmas Island, Cook Island, Falkland Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Iceland, Japan, Kiribati, Mauritius, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Kingdom of Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna.

Non-approved Category 3 countries include: South America, Central America, Caribbean, Europe, Africa, South Africa, Middle East, Canada, Asia.

For more information head to: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/cats-dogs/cats-dogs-returning-to-australia>

Does your airline allow pets to fly with them?

Let's say you're going on holiday with your significant furry other. Your holiday will certainly get off to a 'ruff' start should your pet get turned away at the airport. To avoid barking up the wrong tree, check in advance that your chosen airline will fly pets.

The following is a finite list of Australian serving airlines that will carry pets. Each will have a different set of guidelines and rules for pet travel so be sure to do your homework before you book.

[Virgin](#) - To travel with Virgin Australia, the animal must be held in a container compliant with the airline's guidelines. The pet must not be unduly aggressive and be over 8 weeks old.

[Qantas](#) - Qantas do not allow any animal classed as a dangerous dog – including pit bull terriers, Japanese Tosa and Brazilian fila – to travel on any of their aircraft.

[British Airways](#) - Registered assistance dogs may travel in the cabin of a British Airways flight while all other pets must travel in the cargo hold, except [OpenSkies flights between Paris and New York](#) where cats or dogs under 6kg/13.2lb are accepted in the cabin.

[Jetstar](#) do not allow pets to travel within their cabin. If you wish to travel with your pets you can arrange to do so with [Qantas freight](#), or with [Jetpets](#).

[Air New Zealand](#) - allows domestic pets - cats and dogs (excluding any transported for profit e.g. racing greyhounds) and small caged birds to travel as checked in baggage on all domestic services within NZ.

[Singapore Airlines](#) - allow cats and dogs to travel on the same flight as you in the air-conditioned cargo hold underneath the passenger cabin. Carriage of pets in the aircraft cabin is not permitted, with the exception of service dogs.

What your airline won't allow

There are strict rules around the transportation of animals by air. Airlines and transport providers along with animal welfare agencies and veterinary practitioners have created guidelines to ensure your pet travels safely and comfortably. Here are a few things that airlines typically will not allow;

- **Certain breeds:** Many airlines do not allow breeds like the Brazilian Fila, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, American Pit Bull, American Staffordshire Terrier and Pit Bull Terrier on board or in the hold.
- **Young animals:** Cats and dogs under eight weeks old are usually not allowed to travel.
- **Other animals:** Any animal other than a dog or cat will not be permitted on board.
- **Pregnant animals:** No carriage for pets that have given birth in the last 48 hours before the flight.
- **Large or small cages:** Cages within the hold will have weight and height restrictions e.g. Singapore airlines say the maximum height of the pet cage is 0.56m on flights operated by the A330, and 1.016m on flights operated by the B777.

Just like people, not all pets are suited to air travel. There are heaps of factors to consider before planning to holiday with your pet...

Purr-fect pet planning

- **When to travel?** If your pet is travelling in summer avoid flights during the middle of the day, and in winter avoid early or late flights in the cooler parts of the day.
- **Train to travel:** Not all cats and dogs are born nomads; some prefer the comfort of home and will get stressed in unfamiliar settings. If you are taking a trip away with a nervous pet, start planning as early as possible. A bit of encouragement and training can put even the most anxious of pets at ease.
- **Crate comfort:** If you're taking Rover or Mittens on a plane, they will almost certainly be traveling by crate. There are plenty of ways to make this process easier, including acclimatising your pet to its crate as early as possible. Ensure your pet has a few creature comforts, like their favourite blanket and a toy or two.
- **Optimum conditions:** It's essential to keep your pet as comfortable and well hydrated during the flight as possible. On the other hand, it's not advised to feed your pet for up to six hours before the flight. Take a pit stop with your pet just before departure if you can.
- **It's not forever:** If your pet is not travelling in the cabin with you avoid making a fuss before you part ways. Dogs in particular, will register your anxiety and take it on board.
- **Documentation:** You're required to have all documentation ready before your pet can be permitted to fly, this will include; export and import papers, transit health certificates, relevant licenses or permits and quarantine provisions. Your airline will also need to know your pet's breed, gender, name, age, colour, weight, and cage dimensions.
- **IATA Shipper's Certificate for Live Animals:** This certificate will be issued by your airline before you travel with your pet. It must be properly completed and submitted before you leave.
- **Pregnant animals:** If your pet is pregnant, you will need a vet's written assurance that they are fit-to-fly. Your vet must provide proof your pooch or feline will not give birth mid-air!
- **Age:** Pets over 12 years of age must also be accompanied with a vet certificate stating the pet is fit-for-flight.
- **Certain breeds:** brachycephalic dog breeds (those with short, snubbed noses) are prone to respiratory problems. Take note that these breeds should have larger cages so there is enough air available to circulate.

Leaving your pets behind: a few more questions

So you've decided not to take your pets with you on holiday; that means they will automatically be covered by your regular pet insurance while you're away, right?

Right! However, while the majority of policies do cover your fluffy friends while you're away, it's still a good idea to ask these types of questions;

- Does your pet insurance cover for stays in boarding kennels or catteries when you're away?
- Will your insurance cover your pets when they are away from home?
- Are you required to nominate a carer for your pet while you're away?

Although mobile phones and the internet have made it much easier to be contacted whilst you're away there is always the off chance you won't be in reach in the event of an emergency. It's a good idea to fill out an [Animal Care](#)

[Emergency Authorisation Form](#) for your pet while you're away. In the chance that your pet requires emergency medical attention you can be assured that someone you trust will be able to make any important decisions.

Creature comforts: Leaving your pets at home when you go away

If you do decide to leave your pets at home, you need to take steps to ensure that your animals are safe, healthy and happy while you're away. Here are some tips for holidays without pets;

Get your pets' health checked before you go

The last thing you want is a health scare while you are trying to enjoy your holiday, so you need to be sure that your pets' health and fitness is in good condition before you leave. Arrange a check-up with your veterinarian before you head off.

Sort out accommodation early

Unless you can leave your pets with a friend or family member, you will need to arrange accommodation with a cattery or boarding kennel. The best boarding facilities get booked up well in advance, particularly during peak times like the Christmas or during school holidays. Make arrangements in advance to avoid disappointment.

Do a trial run

If you're leaving your pets at home for the first time, there are ways to lessen any potential separation anxiety. You may want to do a short trial run – either at a cattery/ kennel or at a relative or friend's home – to make sure that your cat or canine is relaxed and comfortable when the time comes for you to say goodbye.

Delayed home from your holidays?

Travel insurance to the rescue! Should you be delayed home your concern may be with the kitty or canine awaiting you back home. Thankfully, a few travel insurers such as [1Cover](#), [Virgin Money](#) and [Webjet](#) will cover you for any additional kennel and cattery fees you incur should you be delayed returning home –how's that for convenience?

As with all pet care, a good deal of research can put you in good stead. Your pet insurance policy will come with a comprehensive Product Disclosure Statement which, while detailed, can provide you with a furry good understanding of your cover.

Your fur-friends are part of the family so it's only natural to have their best interests in mind whilst you holiday. Whether you bring them along or leave them at home, making sure they're cared for is a must. Remember that each insurance policy will differ greatly and not all benefits will come as standard. Travel Insurers will also vary when it comes to pet minding cover so make sure you [compare policies](#) before you buy.