

## **AIRTRAVEL WITH YOUR PET**

I am often asked whether a pet should be sedated when travelling on an aircraft.

Small pets that fit in an approved carrier can sometimes travel in the cabin, but only on certain airline routes, within North America. Larger pets must travel in the cargo section.

The cargo area in the hold of the plane is inevitably cold and noisy. There is no one present to supervise them during the flight, to ensure that they are comfortable and have access to water.

Personally, I have reservations and probably, if I could avoid it, would not subject my pet to this mode of travel. Unfortunately, however, there are circumstances where one cannot avoid undertaking this event.

With regards to sedation, my chief concern would be, if the pet had an adverse reaction to the sedative, with no one there to tend to it.

I suppose I am overly cautious because about 5 years ago I had a client who was in this exact predicament. Upon arrival at her destination, her dog was suffering the effects of an adverse reaction to the sedative. Luckily she was able to find a veterinarian and, in the end, the dog was fine. The outcome of this could have been much worse, and I am personally aware of cases that have had tragic consequences.

I think that if possible, it would be better not to sedate your pet, but if you absolutely need to, then a few days before the journey speak to your veterinarian. Personally, in these circumstances, I would prescribe the sedative for the pet, so that my client could have a trial run on the medication, in the safety of the home, and observe any reactions that may occur.

My other non-medical advice would be — check out the airline you would be using. Get confirmation from them as to their exact protocols on carrying live cargo. You would need to know about pre and post flight containment, i.e. what happens to your pet once you have had to relinquish possession of him/her at check-in.