



What You Need to Know About Pet Travel Crates

By Nelva J. Bryant, DVM, MPH

Pet crates are multiuse containers used for housetraining, a den for sleeping, or for transportation. There are several types of crates available; however, many are not built sturdy or secure enough for safe air transport. Additionally, many do NOT comply with the requirements mandated by the International Air Transport Association Live Animals Regulations (IATA-LAR), however they are often advertised as "airline compliant".

To properly contain pets and allow safe transport via cargo, crates must comply with IATA-LAR. The IATA-LAR provides that shipping container requirements for all live animals being transported via air cargo. For dogs and cats, container requirement #1 (LAR-49-EN-Press (iata.org)) gives the specifications needed.

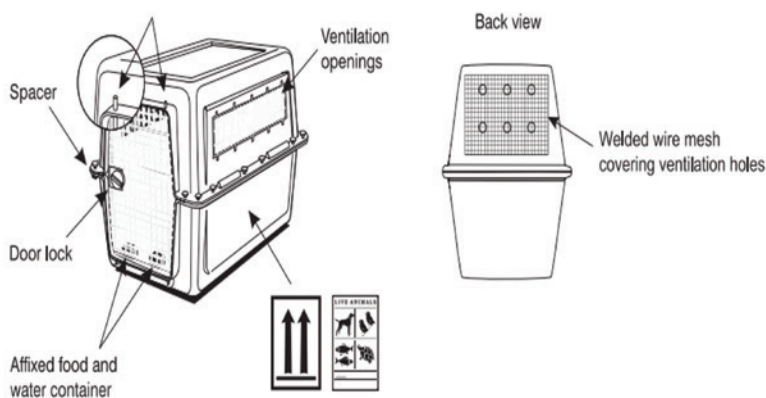
Pet Crates for transport via air cargo must be appropriately sized for the pet, be constructed to prevent a pet from escaping, non-collapsible to prevent harm to the pet, provide ample ventilation, and allow the crate to be handled safely during transport.

Approved crates for transport via cargo MUST have the following features:

- Made of rigid construction with a solid top, however ventilation holes or wire mesh are allowed if they do not reduce the strength of the container or roof.

TYPICAL RIGID PLASTIC CONTAINER

Locking pins must engage the container beyond the extensions by at least 1.6 cm (5/8 in)



- Rigid plastic containers are suitable for most breeds of dogs or cats; however, some may not be suitable for large or very aggressive dog breeds.
- Have ventilation openings on the upper 2/3 portion on three sides (four sides for international travel).
 - Ventilation opening must be nose and paw proof
Opening must be a maximum of 1 in x 1 in for dogs and 3/4 in x 3/4 in for cats.
- The door must have hinges and a door lock. The locking pins of the lock must engage the container beyond the extrusions by at least 5/8 in.

- If a typical rigid plastic dog container, the top and lower parts of the crate are secured by threaded nuts and bolts.
 - Plastic or metal fasteners may be used, but only if nut and bolt style.
 - A nut and bolt must be secured in each hole provided on crates.
- Have containers for food and water affixed to the inside of the crate door (split container permitted).
- Must contain absorbent material or bedding.
- Have a spacer bar or rim, protruding at least ¾ in. (1.9 cm), on all sides with ventilation openings.
- If wheels are present, they must be rendered inoperable by tape or removed to prevent the crate from rolling in transit.

Unapproved crates have any of the following features:

- Are soft-sided, collapsible or foldable.
- Made entirely of wire or wicker.
- Have dual openings/top openings/double doors.
- Have ventilation openings on the lower 1/3 of the crate.
- Have ventilation openings that have a surface/edge to allow the animal to gnaw or scratch.
- If a typical rigid plastic dog container:
 - Have plastic (dial or snap) latches or plastic pegs to adhere the top and lower parts of crate.
 - Have plastic wing barrel door latches (instead of door lock)

Since most "airline approved" pet travel crates on the commercial market do NOT comply with IATA-LAR requirements, pet owners will be required to modify the crates to meet the airlines' requirements. Wire mesh can be used to ensure the ventilation openings are nose and paw proof. Nuts and bolts may be required on 4 corners of the crate for additional reinforcement. These modifications are significant to ensure the safety of pets; however, for international pet travel many countries have adopted IATA-LAR in their regulations. In response, pet owners may incur fines or be required to purchase IATA-LAR compliant crates if their pet is in a crate that does not comply and they are traveling through countries that have adopted the regulations.

Depending upon the airline, shipping a pet in a container that does not comply with IATA-LAR will lead to refusal to transport a pet via air cargo. Remember, this is for the safety of pets during transport via air cargo.

Ultimately, pet crate manufacturers need to be aware that their crates do NOT meet IATA-LAR requirements and that their product is misrepresenting the requirements to transport pets via air cargo.

If you have questions regarding IATA-LAR compliant crates, please contact Dr. Nelva Bryant of When Pets Fly at drbryant@whenpets.com or go to www.whenpets.com for a listing of IATA-LAR compliant crates.



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Veterinary Expertise: International and domestic travel of companion animals, CDC's dog importation regulations, infectious and zoonotic diseases of animals, veterinary public health, animal welfare, veterinary consulting, preventive veterinary medicine, and small animal medicine.

Dr. Nelva Bryant has a unique veterinary career. As a retired LCDR in the US Public Health Service, she held various positions in the US Federal Government (USDA, FDA, and CDC), where she was able to benefit animal and public health. Currently working in the airline industry, her mission is to improve pet travel via promoting animal welfare, education, and veterinary oversight.

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 Training: Live Animal Transportation Course at the International Air Transportation Association (IATA) Center, Amsterdam, Netherlands; USDA Accredited Veterinarian (Category 1 and 2)

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For questions, please email me at: whenpetsfly@gmail.com or go to my website at WhenPets.com for more information.