



By Fintan Browne

# Paw Prints

## Animal Travel

*Most people who own pets quickly find that they treat them as members of the family. They have to factor them in to their daily routines: meals, exercise, playtime, visits to the groomer or vet and even shoppers are all driven by the fluffy bundle of joy that has somehow taken over your house. Something that is less frequently an issue but can pose problems when it does come up is what to do with your pet when you are planning to go on holidays. There are really three main options: you can take them with you, have somebody mind them in your own home or book them in to a boarding kennel or cattery. In this article I will look at these choices in greater detail and hopefully help those of you with pets to make a better informed decision around holiday time.*



### *Holidaying in Ireland & the UK*

For those of us who choose to holiday in Ireland there are many pet friendly options available. In fact when you enter "pet friendly accommodation in Ireland" into Google there are 29,200 results! It may surprise readers to learn that as a contributor to the IPA magazine I do not have a team of researchers at my beck on call. However after my own research I can tell you that the first 10 results were all valid and provided some useful information on pet friendly hotels, guest houses and B&Bs. If you are travelling to Britain there is an even greater selection of pet friendly holiday options available. If you don't have access to the internet the printed AA travel guides have extensive lists of pet friendly accommodation.

Not all owners will feel their pets are best suited to travelling with them on holiday. There are certain problems and risks that should be anticipated in advance. The risk of escape in an unfamiliar location is an obvious worry. This is especially true for cats. Keeping your pet on a leash (most cats can be trained to walk with a harness and leash) will obviously minimise this risk but it is difficult to eliminate it altogether. Pets can slip out open windows or dash through an open door even when the owner is trying to be very careful. Obviously taking your pet on holidays only to have it confined in a cage all of the time defeats the very purpose of bringing it in the first place. If this is going to be an issue for you then it would be worthwhile considering boarding your pet instead. Dogs are easier to control than cats and if well trained will be more responsive to their owner's commands so the risks are smaller. However it is still advisable to make sure that your dog is microchipped and wearing an identity tag before travelling.

A long journey in a hot car can be unpleasant. The addition of dog vomit, slobber and mournful keening will do nothing to improve

the experience. You should consider how well your pet travels in the car before embarking on your journey. For pets that are prone to car sickness the best treatment is to gradually expose them to short car journeys and slowly work your way up to longer trips. Most animals will become accustomed to car travel this way but it can take time! There is also a pheromone spray (DAP Spray by CEVA Animal Health) available from your vet that can help to relax dogs during stressful times such as car journeys. Sedative tablets are usually a last resort and it is not reasonable to expect them to be prescribed for routine travel if the most basic of preparations have not been made.

Finally if you are likely to be occupied in ways which will not involve your pet for long periods of time during your holiday it may be better to make alternative arrangements. A surfing holiday in Bundoran may sound like great fun for you but being cooped up indoors for most of the day might be painfully boring for little Sooty.

### *Travelling Abroad with your Pet*

Since the introduction of the pet passport it is now possible to travel to many foreign countries with your pet without having the animal subjected to a six month quarantine period on your return to Ireland. This is probably not a practical option for short stay breaks abroad but many people now own holiday homes in the sun and may spend months of the summer outside of Ireland. For these people the idea of taking their pet along with them can be an attractive one. There is a small amount of work involved in getting a passport for your pet but it is a relatively straightforward procedure. The "useful links" section of our website ([www.anicare.ie](http://www.anicare.ie)) includes a link directly to the pet passport section of the Department of Agriculture and Food who run the scheme. It is worth doing a little research on the subject before you consider it as an option for your holidays. There are a number of basic steps required:

- Have your pet microchipped (if it has not been done already). This is a simple procedure during which a tiny microchip is injected under the skin of the neck. This chip is encoded with a number which is unique to your pet.



- Complete and post a pet passport application form which you can download from the Dept of Agriculture web site. You will need to have your vet sign and stamp this form.
- Have your pet vaccinated against rabies.
- One month after the rabies vaccination have a blood test taken for rabies serology. This is to prove that your pet has had an effective response to the vaccination and so is deemed to be immune to the rabies virus.
- You must have your pet treated for ticks and tapeworm shortly before entering Ireland.

It is important to know that your pet will not be able to travel back into Ireland on this pet passport before six months have passed after a positive rabies serology blood test. Bearing this in mind you would really need to plan at least seven months in advance for your trip. There is more detailed advice available on the Department's website so if you are intending to travel abroad please take some time to do the research.

There are a number of other points you should bear in mind before travelling abroad with your pet:

- Overweight or elderly animals may not tolerate excessive heat well. This is especially true of certain brachycephalic (short nosed) breeds like bulldogs.
- Sunburn and heat stroke will be more of an issue in almost any country other than Ireland.
- There are a number of significant parasitic diseases that are common in other parts of the world but do not exist in Ireland. Your vet can advise you on effective preventative treatments for these.
- You will need to research carriers that will take pets. Many airlines no longer allow pets to travel on their planes so often you will have to travel by ferry.
- You do not need a pet passport to travel to the UK.

### *Boarding Your Pet*

In many situations putting your pet into a boarding establishment may turn out to be the best option. It can eliminate the stress of a long car journey and give you the peace of mind that your pet is being cared for in a secure and welcoming environment. Try research the kennels before you book: look at the entries in the Golden Pages, maybe ask friends for recommendations or ask your local vet. I would say that it is important to speak to the people who run the boarding kennels and ask can you visit to see the facilities before you board your pet. The accommodation should be secure and comfortable and dogs should either have outdoor runs or a scheduled exercise regime.

Other points to consider are:

- Does the kennel insist on all animals having up to date vaccinations, including for kennel cough? If not I would look elsewhere.
- Make sure to treat your pet for fleas before sending it in to board with an effective spot-on flea control product. This will eliminate the possibility of it coming home with some unwelcome passengers.
- It is sensible to treat your pet for worms after boarding.
- If your pet has any special dietary requirements make sure to discuss these with the kennel owners. If your pet is on a special diet you may need to bring along your own supply of food.
- Make sure that the kennel owners have a contact number for your regular vet in case they need to discuss any medical problems.

Finally it is worth reassuring readers that most pets cope very well with the regular routine of a well run boarding kennels, so don't spend your holidays fretting if you have had to leave them at home!

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