

■ ANN LANDERS

Airline Cargo Hold Is No Place for an Animal

Dear Ann Landers: It's time to break out the wet noodle. You gave a terrible response to the man on the plane who was seated next to a passenger with a



cat. The woman had smuggled her cat aboard and was holding it on her lap. Unfortunately, her seatmate was allergic to cats. You were right when you said he should have asked the flight attendant to move him to another seat. You were wrong, however, when you said the woman should have placed the cat in an animal carrier and put it in cargo.

Airline cargo holds are absolutely no place for an animal. These holds are intended for baggage and other freight, not for living creatures. Many airlines do not regulate the air pressure or the oxygen in cargo, and an animal placed there for an extended period of time could suffocate. The cargo hold is also not sound-insulated, which means the animals would be subjected to the deafening roar of the engines, and their hearing is very sensitive. Furthermore, baggage handlers have no more respect for animal crates than they have for luggage. Any animals in cargo could be injured or killed through careless handling.

I wouldn't send a cockroach by air cargo. That woman who loved her cat would be have

been horrified to find it dead in its crate upon arrival. Please tell your readers never to check their pets as airline cargo. If you must bring your pet on a plane, put it in a carrier, and stow it under your seat. This type of "carry-on" luggage is permitted by most airlines. If the pet is too large for a carrier, drive to your destination instead of taking a plane, or leave the animal at home. However much you might miss your pet, coming home will be a lot happier when "Fluffy" is alive to greet you. Pass the word, Ann. - **Animal Lover in Memphis, Tenn.**

Letter from Millie Woolf to Ann Landers:

Dear Ann Landers:

I take issue with the letter you printed from Animal Lover in Memphis, Tenn. Our newspaper used the headline "Airline cargo hold is no place for an animal." My husband and I have been in the pet shipping business for 23 years. He is a practicing veterinarian...since 1960. We would never do anything for an animal that we thought was unsafe or inhumane. We were one of 6 founders of the "Independent Pet and Animal Transportation Association International" in 1979. Today IPATA has 93 members worldwide and is dedicated to safe and caring pet shipping.

Those airlines that accept pets have the best interest of the pets at heart. Airline employees are trained in the care and handling of pets. Most are pet owners themselves and put forth the extra effort to handle the pets properly. We find the airlines very caring and very safe.

Professional pet shippers and airlines attend seminars, keep up to date with the latest regulations and handle thousands of pets per year most successfully.

I think you should research the subject before you take lashes with a wet noodle and print an inaccurate letter. Visit the IPATA website at www.ipata.com or our website at www.airanimal.com.

Millie Woolf, President - Air Animal, Inc.

Past-President, IPATA (Independent Pet and Animal Transportation Association International)

Past-President, AATA (Animal Transportation Association)

■ **ANN LANDERS**

Cargo hold is OK for pets

Dear Ann Landers: Break out the wet noodle for printing that letter from the "Animal Lover" who said a plane's cargo hold was no place for a pet. She said she wouldn't ship a cockroach in cargo.



I am a pilot for a major airline. At least one cargo hold in every plane is insulated, and the temperature and pressure controlled. In most aircraft, that cargo compartment has the same ventilating system as the passenger compartment.

I have hauled tropical fish from the Orient, show dogs to Japan, and reptiles all over the United States. Since we charge for transporting animals, it is in our best interest to do a good job. Our baggage handlers are wonderful. I've seen them talk to dogs and cats before loading them, and checking for sufficient water. If you wish to carry a pet in the cabin, you must notify the airline ahead of time. Usually, there is a fee.

Most of us have pets of our own, and so we take good care of those in our charge. I've never had to take a pet off the airplane for drunkenness or unruly behavior, which is more than I can say for some passengers.

-- Pilot in Brainbridge Island, Wash.

Pilot: Thanks for your cogent comments. If anyone knows that territory, it's the person in the cockpit. Keep reading for more:

Pembroke, Bermuda: When I moved here last year, my dog had to travel in cargo. She was

diagnosed with cancer, and so I bring her back to Ohio for periodic veterinary visits. I always put a note on her cage, along with a photo and instructions for her care. I also put her blanket and several toys in the cage to comfort her. I researched the airlines thoroughly, and found that most take good care of animals. USAirways does the best job. One pilot actually reassured me over the sound system that my dog would be "just fine."

Seoul, South Korea: I recently transferred to South Korea, and brought along our three dogs. Both American Airlines and United were terrific. They were caring, concerned and gentle. The cargo hold is pressurized and the lighting is perfect. The temperature is controlled, and the animals travel in total comfort.

Mashpee, Mass.: Many people are allergic to animals, especially when confined to the small space of a plane. Considering the cost of airfare these days, no one should have to sit next to a cat.

Orlando, Fla.: Every year, 2,500 of the top champion dogs appear in the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in New York. The majority of them are flown in. Do you think for one moment that any of the owners would risk their dogs' lives in airplanes if the cargo holds were not safe?

El Dorado, Kan.: Every year for the annual ARBA National Convention, hundreds of rabbits are shipped by air cargo, and I have never heard of one that was dead on arrival. The majority of us use Delta Airlines, which has been our official carrier for years. Their staff is experienced and especially caring.

Mesa, Ariz.: I moved from Minneapolis to Phoenix with two cats. My vet gave the cats a mild tranquilizer before the flight. I watched the baggage handlers with interest. They were gentle and kind.

The cats suffered no trauma whatsoever.

Harrisburg, Pa.: We flew across the country last July with our beloved Labrador retriever. The travel attendants who loaded her checked the cage for safety, and made sure her water dish was filled and her crate lined with newspapers. While waiting for a connecting flight, we were paged because our dog had upset her water dish, and the baggage handlers were concerned that she would need more water. They even provided a leash so my husband could walk her. Howzat for service?

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