

How To Move Your Pets

Atlas helps to make your pet's transition as stress-free as possible.



Relocating can be stressful for family members — pets included. At Atlas Van Lines, we want to make the transition as smooth as possible for your pet, furry or scaly, by providing some basic information and tips on moving your pets.

All pets require special attention and consideration when moving, and the essential ingredient to your pet's stress-free move is preplanning. The following information outlines the points to consider when relocating with your pet. If you have other questions, please consult your Atlas representative.

Before You Move [\(top\)](#)

Contact the State Veterinarian's Office or State Department of Agriculture requesting the pet laws and regulations of your destination state. Many communities have zoning laws that prohibit you from keeping pets such as goats, pigs and chickens in residential areas. Also, cats, dogs, aquariums and exotic pets (iguanas, venomous snakes, tarantulas, ferrets, etc.) may not be allowed in apartment or condo complexes. Make sure your lease allows them on the premises before you move in.

If you have a wolf, monkey, big cat, or any other large exotic animal, you will likely need a special permit to keep it. The state agencies listed at the end of this page can help answer your pet questions.

After complying with the state regulations, check with the City Clerk's office in your new community for local pet ordinances. "Leash Laws" are common, licensing may be necessary, and the number of pets per household may be limited.

Once you are sure your pet will be allowed in your new community and/or complex, request your pet's health records from your veterinarian. This information will help your new veterinarian provide better care for your pet.

Before your departure, make sure you have a recent photograph of your pet (in case the animal is lost), and the proper pet documents, such as:

1. A Health Certificate less than 10 days old. Most states require one for dogs. Many states require one for cats, birds, and certain exotic animals as well. Check with your veterinarian or one of the state animal-control agencies listed in the back to determine if your pet requires a Health Certificate. The certificate must be issued by a licensed veterinarian, and current inoculation records must accompany it.
2. A Permit. You may need to purchase a permit allowing your exotic pet to enter the destination state. Your veterinarian may assist you in applying for one.
3. Identification. Whether you are traveling by air or car, any pet that can wear a collar should have one on, with an ID tag secured to it. Birds may be identified by leg bands. The ID tag should include the pet's name, your name, and the destination address. In addition to ID, most states require dogs, cats and some exotic animals to have a rabies tag on their collars. Check with your veterinarian or one of the state animal-control agencies listed in the back.

Choosing A Moving Method [\(top\)](#)

Now you are ready to relocate your pet but must decide how to do it. You can hire a professional pet-moving service to transport your four-legged family member or do it yourself. Movers are not permitted to transport pets, nor are buses or trains (Seeing Eye dogs are the exception for the latter two).

If your pet requires special handling when moving, you may consider using a professional pet service that can take care of everything for you. Your Atlas representative can recommend a reputable service.

The Pet Carrier [\(top\)](#)

The importance of a sturdy, comfortable carrier for your pet cannot be overemphasized. A carrier should be large enough for the pet to stand up, turn around, and lie down. It must have adequate cross-ventilation and a leak-proof bottom with layers of absorbent lining. It should have a secure closing mechanism on the door but do not lock the kennel. Federal regulations require that your pet be accessible in the event of an emergency.

Most airlines have pet carriers available for purchase with advance notice (48 hours or more). These kennels meet all US Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) and International Air Transport Association (IATA) requirements for pet transportation. Pet stores also may have acceptable carriers for sale. Birds must be placed in durable pet carriers other than conventional bird cages.

Get your pet accustomed to the carrier several days before a flight or car ride by using it as a bed. Placing a favorite toy or blanket inside will make your pet feel more secure.

By Air [\(top\)](#)

If you plan to fly your pet to its new home, first confirm that the airline allows animals. If it does, give

notice when you book your flight that your pet will be traveling with you. Some airlines allow pets inside the cabin (first-come, first-served basis) if the pet is odorless, inoffensive, and kept in a USDA and IATA-approved container small enough to fit under the seat. Properly harnessed Seeing Eye dogs may sit at the owner's feet.

Pets not accompanied by the owner, or too large to travel inside the cabin, must travel air freight. Most airlines accept dogs, cats, birds and fish in air freight. But if you have a venomous snake or other exotic pet, it may not be allowed on the plane.

Minimize your pet's stress by avoiding through-checking and plane changes. Moving your pet from one plane to another adds extra work, cost and stress to your pet's relocation. Remember to have all the proper documents and a recent photo of your pet handy. You may need to bring your pet to freight loading two or more hours before departure. Mark the container with the animal's name and note if it bites. Write the words "FRAGILE. LIVE ANIMAL" and "THIS SIDE UP" clearly on the outside of the container.

For your pet's welfare and comfort on any flight, accompanied or not, be sure to:

1. Feed your pet a light meal five to six hours before flight time; but, do not give it water two hours before take-off, except on very hot days. Do not feed fish for two to three days before shipping.
2. Exercise your pet (on a leash) at the airport and administer any required medications. After placing your pet in the carrier, secure the closing mechanism and fasten the leash to the outside of the container.
3. **Turtles** — the easiest pet to transport — can be mailed overnight. Pack them in well-cushioned Styrofoam boxes with air holes and lined with soft grass or leaves. The box should not be so tight that the turtle cannot extend its legs or head. Write "FRAGILE. LIVE ANIMAL" and "THIS SIDE UP" on the box. Keep the surroundings moist, but not wet, by dampening a cloth and placing it inside the container.
4. **Fish** — should be packed in plastic containers equipped with battery operated aerators and placed in strong boxes.

Pets must be picked up from the airport within a reasonable time (usually within 24 hours of arrival). If not, they will either be returned to point of origin or placed in a kennel at the owner's expense.

Be aware that airlines may refuse to transport a pet if:

- it cannot be shipped within a 24-hour period,
- the ground temperature is below 45°F or above 85°F at either origin or destination,
- it is not in a USDA and IATA-approved container or without proper identification and certificates,
- the pet has been sedated, unless the drug name, dosage and how it was administered is noted on the carrier.

By Car [\(top\)](#)

Car travel is the most common means of pet transportation. It provides a feeling of security for your pet (as well as for you), and it is less expensive. Again, advance planning is essential. Traveling with your pet can be a pleasant experience when you follow certain guidelines.

If your pet is not used to car travel, take it on short rides before the trip to help accustom it to the motion of the car. If your pet is prone to motion sickness, consult your veterinarian about medication to reduce or eliminate the symptoms.

Do not feed or water your pet for a few hours before you leave. After you are on the road, feed only once daily. Take a supply of water from home; different water on the road can cause upset stomachs for pets. Make frequent stops to water and exercise your pet, and keep your pet on a leash for its protection — and yours.

While riding in the car, do not let your pet hang out the window. Dirt and insects can fly into its eyes, causing irritation and infection. Keep power-windows locked to prevent your pet — especially cats — from lowering the window and jumping out.

If your car is not equipped with air conditioning, leave the windows cracked 1" to 1 1/2". Pets need plenty of air, especially when it is hot, or when the animal is prone to motion sickness.

Small animals, such as gerbils, hamsters and guinea pigs are sensitive to hot and cold temperatures. A good guide is your own comfort zone; if you are hot or cold, chances are your small pet will be, too. Try not to leave your pet in the car alone. If it is unavoidable, lock the car doors, crack windows for cross-ventilation, and leave water with your pet. Check on your pet frequently if you must leave it alone for very long.

Remove the water and food dishes of birds and other small caged animals to avoid messy spills while the car is moving. Feed and water these pets at stops along the way. Keep your bird's cage covered to help calm it. If you are transporting fish in plastic bags, do not put them in direct sunlight or cold drafts.

Hotel Stays ([top](#))

If you anticipate overnight stops, contact several lodgings along your route and confirm your pet will be admitted. No pet should be left in the car overnight. Most hotel chains have a toll-free telephone number available via your 1-800-555-1212 information operator. The reservation center may be able to assist you in finding hotels on your route that accept pets. Check your local library for pet-friendly lodging directories, or search the Internet. Snakes should be put into the bathtub and allowed to soak for about an hour once you have checked in.

If you leave your pet alone in a motel room, notify the management and hang the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door.

When staying overnight on the road, be sure to have with you:

- an ample supply of food, fresh water from home, and a dish for each pet,
- a leash and grooming brush,
- medications,
- extra towels and newspaper,
- a favorite toy or blanket,
- room deodorizer for hotel rooms.

Arriving At Your New Home ([top](#))

Like people, pets need time to become accustomed to a new house and new faces. Using your pet's favorite food bowl, bedding and toys will aid greatly in getting your pet to feel right at home. Once you and your family are settled in, locate a veterinarian.

Ask your previous veterinarian for a recommendation before you move, or you can contact the local [Humane Society](#) or the [American Animal Hospital Association \(AAHA\)](#) at 303-986-2800 for the names

of veterinarians in your area.

If your pet will have free-roam of your new home, let the animal come out of its cage when it is ready by leaving the door open.

General Reminders [\(top\)](#)

Keep your pet's routine as regular as possible during the premoving stages and the move itself. If you normally feed, exercise, or play with your pet at certain times, continue to do so. During the final crunch of moving, you may find it is better if your pet stays at a friend's home or kennel. This may help reduce the chances of it getting upset and running away, or hiding in one of the moving boxes, as cats are prone to do.

At any stage of your move, consult your Atlas representative if you have questions. Your Atlas professionals are always ready to help.

Pet Information Directory [\(top\)](#)

Alabama

Dept. of Agriculture
(334) 240-7255

Alaska

State Veterinarian
(907) 745-3236

Arizona

Dept. of Agriculture
(602) 542-4293

Arkansas

Livestock & Poultry Commission
(501) 907-2400

California

Dept. of Food & Agriculture
(916) 654-0881

Colorado

Dept. of Agriculture
(303) 239-4161

Montana

Dept. of Livestock
(406) 444-2043

Nebraska

Dept. of Agriculture
(402) 471-2351

Nevada

Dept. of Agriculture
Bureau of Animal Industry
(775) 688-1180

New Hampshire

Dept. of Agriculture,
Markets & Food
Division of Animal Industry
(603) 271-2404

New Jersey

Dept. of Agriculture
Division of Animal Health
(609) 292-3965

New Mexico

Livestock Board
(505) 841-6161

Connecticut

Dept. of Agriculture
(860) 713-2505

Delaware

Dept. of Agriculture
(302) 739-4811

Florida

Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services Division
of Animal Industry
(850) 410-0910

Georgia

Dept. of Agriculture
(404) 656-3671

Hawaii

Dept. of Agriculture
Division of Animal Industry
(808) 483-7111

Idaho

Dept. of Agriculture
(208) 332-8540

Illinois

Dept. of Agriculture
Division of Animal Industry
(217) 782-4944

Indiana

Indiana State Board of
Animal Health
(317) 227-0300

Iowa

Dept. of Agriculture
(515) 281-5305

Kansas

Animal Health Department
(785) 296-2326

New York

Dept. of Agriculture
Division of Animal Industry
(518) 457-3502

North Carolina

State Veterinarian
(919) 733-7601

North Dakota

Board of Animal Health
Dept. of Agriculture
(701) 328-2655

Ohio

Dept. of Agriculture
Division of Animal Industry
(614) 728-6220

Oklahoma

Dept. of Agriculture
Animal Industry Services
(580) 522-6131

Oregon

Dept. of Agriculture
Animal Health & Identification Division
(503) 986-4680

Pennsylvania

Dept. of Agriculture
(717) 772-2852

Rhode Island

Division of Agriculture
Dept. of Environmental
Management, Animal Health
(401) 222-2781

South Carolina

Clemson University
Livestock-Poultry Health Division
(803) 788-2260

Tennessee

Dept. of Agriculture
Ellington Agriculture Center
(615) 837-5120

Kentucky

Dept. of Agriculture
Division of Animal Health
(502) 564-3956

Louisiana

Dept. of Agriculture
Office of Animal Health Services
(225) 925-3980

Maine

Dept. of Agriculture
Division of Animal Health & Industry (207) 287-3701

Maryland

Dept. of Agriculture
(410) 841-5810

Massachusetts

Bureau of Animal Health
(617) 626-1790

Michigan

Dept. of Agriculture
Animal Industry Division
(517) 373-1077

Minnesota

Board of Animal Health
(651) 296-2942

Mississippi

Board of Animal Health
(601) 359-1170

Missouri

Dept. of Agriculture
(573) 751-3377

Texas

Animal Health Commission
(512) 719-0700

Utah

Dept. of Agriculture
(801) 538-7160

Vermont

Dept. of Agriculture, Food & Markets (802) 828-2421

Virginia

Dept. of Agriculture
(804) 786-2483

Washington

Dept. of Agriculture
Food Safety/Animal Health Division
(360) 902-1878

West Virginia

Dept. of Agriculture
(304) 558-2214

Wisconsin

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer
Protection
(608) 224-4872

Wyoming

Livestock Board
(307) 777-6443