

# The Association for **Animal Welfare Advancement**



## COMPANION ANIMAL TRANSPORT PROGRAMS BEST PRACTICES

### ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

Best practices are a set of guidelines, which lay out efficient and effective methods to achieve optimal results. The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement (The Association, formerly known as SAWA) establishes best practices in a variety of areas that lead to superior care of animals and help our members have more impact on their communities. The methods in this document are generally accepted as those that will produce the best results for animals cared for by animal welfare organizations.

We acknowledge that some of the activities described here may be beyond the current operational capabilities of many animal welfare organizations. As best practices, these protocols and techniques are not necessarily the most accessible, but rather are the most effective. If an organization is not currently capable of implementing all of the recommendations in this document, we encourage organizations to consistently improve services in order to advance the care given to the animals entrusted to them.

---

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Overview**

The Association considers transport programs integral to serving the needs of companion animals. Animal transport, at its most basic level, is a supply and demand equation. However, there is much more to consider when establishing a successful transport program that benefits communities, adopters, over-crowded source organizations, destination organizations, and most importantly, companion animals.

Today's organizational workplace is constantly evolving along with the policies, procedures, and laws that guide our work. To better assist The Association members with this challenge, The Association leaders have developed the following Transport Best Practice guidelines, templates, and tools along with recommended links to other resources. Sample policies are intended to be guidelines only. Please consult with an attorney or licensing authority before adopting or implementing any policy or practice to avoid conflict with state or federal statutes that may apply to your organization as laws vary from state to state and country to country.

## The Role of Transport

Transport provides a means of addressing animal population imbalance across the country. It supports the movement of animals from organizations overburdened with more animals than they have the capacity to care for and a limited market demand, to organizations with fewer animals and higher market demand, thus reducing euthanasia and saving animal lives.

There are different models for transport relationships. The following must be considered when forming these relationships:

- Market demand – Considerations for the destination organizations must include community demand and community capacity as well as the demand, capacity, and specific mission of the organization. Destination organizations are often in areas where demand exceeds local supply. Transport enables organizations to provide their communities with a wide range of companion animals for adoption. As a result, organizations can remain a trusted and valued source for pets. Developing an understanding of the potential impacts of not fulfilling that demand are the first steps.
- Collective responsibility for animals – Agencies must consider the role and responsibility that they have within their local community, regional community, and broader national community. We have a responsibility for the success of our independent organizations and a collective responsibility for the success of the industry and our work on behalf of animals.
- Disease transmission risks - Numerous factors that influence risks must be considered including preventive healthcare protocols, biosecurity practices, disease prevalence at the source and destination, and individual disease and animal characteristics. Avoid, if possible, co-mingling. In addition, transporting animals from multiple locations in the same vehicle, the duration of transport, and accommodations made to mitigate stress during animal handling and housing will all influence the level of risk.
- Driver for placement of animals – Transport, when done properly and safely, has the potential to save the lives of animals in overcrowded organizations while at the same time freeing up time and resources in those communities to address some of the root causes of population issues. The end goal being that homeless animals are placed into homes, while population issues continue to be addressed where needed.
- Local, regional, national, and international transport – Transporting animals has a potential impact on many levels. Organizations should work with and consider each of their specific communities to develop a plan that works best for their local community while at the same time connects to the broader community. Consideration must be given first to local transport needs, then regionally, nationally, and internationally last.

## Definitions

There are many different potential models for transport relationships; some of which include:

- Organization to Organization – One organization develops a relationship with another and works directly to facilitate transport. Transport could be done by either the source, destination, or a third party.

- Hub – Also called an Aggregator. An organization responsible for providing a facility and care for animals who are transported from other agencies through a single facility on their way to their final destination. Multiple sources and destinations will have relationships with a hub. Hubs will assist source organizations with funding and support to reduce the need for transport. Transport could be done by either the source, destination organization, or a third party.
- Source – The organization where animals being transported from originate. Sources are responsible for proper preparation of animals for transport.
- Destination – The organization accepting animals from a transport for placement. Destinations are responsible for all care and placement of animals upon arrival.
- Third Party Transporter – An independent organization that specializes in transport and is not a sheltering organization. The third-party transporter works with both the source and the destination organization to facilitate transport and movement of the animals.
- Volunteer Transport – Typically, foster based and volunteer run organizations are facilitating transport by removing animals to foster from a source organization in advance of transport – days to weeks. Transportation is provided through a network of individual drivers.
- Multi Source Transports – Transporting animals from different source populations should be avoided whenever possible to help minimize the transmission of infectious diseases across animal populations. When co-transporting is necessary, steps should be taken to minimize the risk of cross-exposure between animals from different sources.
- Waystation – Transport waystations are used as a rest stop over for animals (and drivers) on long distance transport. Ideally waystations only house one transport vehicle of animals at a time.

### **Potential Barrier to Transport Programs**

Animal transport is an important component in sheltering and there are several over-arching issues that could significantly impede the ability to transport animals.

State veterinarians have valid and serious concerns about animals being moved across state borders without proper health certificates, also known as Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) and the required vaccinations. Local authorities are concerned about unscreened animals who may pose a public health or safety risk entering their jurisdictions. Several states have implemented permit programs for all organizations participating in transporting animals as a means of regulating the practice and some jurisdictions have even discussed regulation to stop transport altogether.

It is incumbent upon all organizations working to alleviate the companion animal population imbalance to ensure that all stakeholder concerns are adequately monitored and addressed if transport programs are to be a widely accepted tool in the effort to find homes for all healthy and treatable animals. To this end, The Association encourages collaboration among all stakeholders to provide input for our efforts to promote the best practice, which will ensure the safe and effective transport of animals between organizations. Animal transport is an important tool in reducing pet population issues. It is our responsibility to be vigilant, guard against abuses, and role model quality transport to ensure continued access to this valuable tool that saves animal lives.

## **Key Considerations – Is Transport Right for Your Organization?**

The transport of animals from one organization to another has been a common practice for more than a decade. During this time, transport has evolved. Transport impacts individual agencies, whole communities, and most importantly individual animal lives.

When embarking on transport, there are a number of key considerations that each organization and its organizational leadership must create a transport plan and determine whether the organization is ready and has the capacity to participate in transport.

When determining whether an organization is ready to participate in transport, the following must be considered and understood.

- Your organization's motivations for transport
- Impact on/capacity of your organization
- Impact on/capacity of your community
- Outcomes for animals
- Partnership capacity between source and/or destination agencies
- Financial implications

## **Disease Risk**

The transport of animals can and does mean that animal disease is also transported on occasion. This risk will vary depending on the model utilized. Numerous factors can influence this risk including intermixing of animals from multiple locations, length and stress of transport, type of infectious disease, individuals shedding/incubating infectious agents, susceptibility of animals transported, and biosecurity measures employed. Preventive healthcare protocols, biosecurity practices, and disease prevalence in the geographic area must be considered prior to and during transport to mitigate the impact of infectious disease.

## **Motivations for Transport**

There are many factors that could impact our agencies and influence our decision about transport.

- Do you have a community imbalance with low demand resulting in increased euthanasia?
- Do you have a community imbalance with high demand and too few animals?
- Does high adoption demand give you the capacity to help animals from other agencies or regions?
- Do you want variety in your adoption center?
- Are there favorable or unfavorable financial ramifications to participate?
- Are you motivated to be a primary resource for people to acquire a pet?

In the end, animal welfare is the highest consideration.

## Impact on Your Organization

Transport requires adequate physical infrastructure, staffing, and financial resources. The depth and type of resources needed depend on whether you are a source or destination organization.

- Do you have the capacity for required medical care to prepare an animal for transport or to care for an animal upon receipt?
- Do you have the space to appropriately house animals awaiting transport or the space to appropriately house a high volume of animals upon receipt of transport?
- Do you have staffing and/or volunteer capacity to prepare for sending or receiving a varied volume of animals in addition to the required maintenance of those in your ongoing care?
- If you transport animals in, does it divert resources away from addressing the needs of more difficult to place animals in your community, limiting or ending their options for placement?
- Are there source or destination agencies you can work with in your local service area before expanding beyond that reach?
- Does your community have the capacity to provide placement for the animals you transport in?
- Are you able to maintain a desirable set of animals for placement in your community if you are transporting out?
- If you are a destination organization are you ready to partner with and support the source agencies beyond taking their dogs or cats?
- If you are a source organization are you ready to pursue changes that address the population imbalances in your community as a long-term solution?

## Impact on Your Community

Beyond what your organization is prepared for, how will what you do impact other animal welfare agencies in your community and the welfare overall of animals in the community?

- If you transport animals in how does it impact the total volume of animals available in your community?
- Are you working collaboratively in your community to best meet the direct needs before transporting from outside?
- While using transport as a means of reducing euthanasia are you pursuing other avenues in the community to address long term population issues?

## Outcomes for Animals

Transport is used as a means of addressing community animal population imbalances—moving them from an organization or community with more animals than demand to one with more demand than animals. This process can support and address a number of needs and issues. Most importantly, it is for the purpose of providing the best outcomes for animals. It is important to ensure that animals being transported don't die or cause the death of another animal in the community due to resource constraints tied to transport.

## **Partnership Capacity between Source and Destination Agencies**

Transport is not just a means of moving animals from one location to another. It is a partnership and collaboration between agencies that provides a short-term solution to a deeper problem.

1. Are you prepared to invest in your own community to end the population imbalance long-term?
2. Are you prepared to invest in achieving best practice standards for transport for both the source and destination organization?
3. Are you prepared to share resources to ensure a balanced and equitable collaboration that saves animal lives?

---

### **KEY ELEMENTS**

The way agencies conduct themselves, regardless of their role in a transport program, will impact credibility and either undermine or garner trust in the organization's ability to be an effective transport partner. Agency conduct and maintaining high standards will build confidence in the community, among partners, and with regulatory agencies.

To engage in transport, the following must be adhered to:

- A. Public health and safety must be the primary concern;
- B. All source and destination agencies must be registered 501-(c) (3) agencies or municipal organizations;
- C. All participants must be committed to abiding by all local, state, and federal regulations; and
- D. Humane standards of care must be afforded to every animal before, during, and after transport.

### **General Requirements for Source and Destination Organizations**

1. Source and destination organizations must establish a solid working relationship, both for philosophical alignment and ongoing communication. The relationship is codified in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). See Exhibits A and A1 – MOU Template and Sample MOU.
  - a. Source and destination organizations must establish a clear understanding of each organization's capacity for medical treatment.
  - b. Organizations must agree on a method for animal behavior to be observed and/or assessed prior to transport. Destinations must identify what behaviors will prohibit them from placing an animal so those animals are not transported to an organization where they do not have an opportunity for placement.
  - c. A risk assessment of disease concerns specific to local or geographical regions must be done and appropriate protocols established based on this assessment.
  - d. Source and destination agencies enter into a trusting partnership whereby ultimately the destination is responsible for the outcome of the animals if they are not placeable. Returning pets to the source organization can create stress for the animals and is a draw on resources that could be better used to save lives.

- e. If two agencies determine that returns will be part of their arrangement, clear guidelines are established from the start of the partnership and are strictly followed. Consideration must be given to minimizing stress of the animals, including an acceptable health or behavior plan for those animals who are returned.
2. The relationship between source and destination organizations is a collaboration meant to have a positive impact on the communities of both agencies and the animals – short term and long term. Collaboration may be warranted to not only transport animals but also develop a long-term solution to address the excess of animals in a source community.
3. The destination organization must:
  - a. Have a community demand from adopters for animals being accepted.
  - b. Not euthanize animals (that are healthy or treatable and do not pose a danger to the public or other animals) of the species being transported due to a lack of capacity to provide appropriate medical or behavioral care.
  - c. Have a strong infrastructure appropriate to the volume of animals being transported.
  - d. Comply with state and federal regulations.
4. There must be a designated coordinator at both ends of the transport. This is essential. The role of the coordinator is to:
  - a. Facilitate and organize timing, number, and types of dogs, puppies, cats, or kittens.
  - b. Evaluate any health or behavior considerations.
    - i. Transparency and full disclosure of all conditions is crucial in maintaining a good relationship.
  - c. Maintain good communication between the agencies. Communication needs to occur both ways for any issues that arise.
5. Prior to each transport, develop a transport census:
  - a. Source organizations must share lists of animals being considered for transport.
  - b. When the final transport list is generated, the description and history of the animals must include a photo of the animal and must include a physical description, intake date, reason for surrender, health and behavior status, and any other available information. Exhibit B –Transport Census Spreadsheet
  - c. Transfer/Transport coordinators must develop a mutually acceptable protocol and timeframe for approving the animals who will be transported.
  - d. All pertinent individual animal records must be electronically transferred to the destination organization prior to transport.
6. Destination organizations must be flexible as to the animals they will accept and not expect all puppies or kittens or animals highly easy to place. Source organizations should ensure that the populations of animals they maintain supports a mix of animals who can be adopted within a relatively short period of time and helps drive traffic to their agencies for placement.
7. All animals scheduled for interstate transport must travel with a valid CVI, as required, and be transported in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
8. Each animal must be treated with dignity and respect throughout the process.

### **Transport Preparation and Receipt**

An organization's available resources will determine how robust their transport program can be. The critical relationship between the participating agencies combined with their joint

expectations and their joint resource capabilities will ultimately determine the scope and size of the transport partnership.

Public health and the health of the animal population at both the source and destination agencies are of utmost importance. Consultation with a veterinarian is recommended with implementation of the practices outlined below. The following practices will be in place prior to transport of animals:

1. Transported animals will have received the following vaccinations prior to or upon intake at the source organization and have been provided with appropriate booster vaccinations, until they are transported. It is not required for an animal to have a booster for an initial vaccine prior to transport. Holding animals at the source solely for to receive a vaccine booster is counterproductive.
  - a. Feline
    - Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia (FVRCP)
    - Modified live vaccines must be used for FVRCP
  - b. Canine
    - Distemper, Adenovirus 2 (Hepatitis), Parvo, Parainfluenza (DA2PP), and Bordetella
    - Modified live vaccines must be used for DA2PP.
2. All dogs and cats 12 weeks of age and older must be vaccinated for rabies before transport. Both source and destination organizations need to know their state rabies vaccination laws to ensure compliance and appropriate re-immunization intervals as additional vaccinations may be required. The AVMA has a complete listing of these state laws. Other vaccines should be administered based on legal requirements and risk at source and destination organizations.
  - a. Example: Michigan requires Leptospirosis for import and there are some areas of the county where Canine Influenza is epidemic.
3. Transported animals are administered preventative flea and tick treatment prior to transport.
4. Transported animals will be treated for diagnosed internal and external parasites.
  - a. At a minimum, all dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens will be dewormed with a product effective against hookworms and roundworms prior to transport.
5. Transported animals will have a physical exam conducted by a trained animal care professional within 24 hours of transport to ensure the animal is healthy. A similar exam must be performed upon arrival at the destination organization. Any abnormalities will be disclosed to the destination organization prior to transport and, if approved to send, documentation of those abnormalities will be sent with the animal.
  - a. The animals must be screened for signs of infectious disease such as vomiting, diarrhea, respiratory signs, hair loss/skin lesions, and any other signs of disease or injury.
  - b. The animal's overall condition needs to be assessed including temperature, any general malaise, lethargy, or anorexia.
6. Animals with contagious or communicable diseases must be deemed ineligible for transport. Transfer of animals with a known illness may be justified if life-saving resources that are unavailable at the source can be provided at the destination. In this instance, the following conditions will also be met:



- a. All precautions will be taken during transport to ensure the comfort, health, and safety of the sick animal, as well as the rest of the animals on board.
  - b. Transporting the animal will not exacerbate the diagnosed condition or cause additional pain/discomfort to the animal.
  - c. The condition of the animal is fully disclosed to the destination organization prior to transport. Disclosure will include all medical records.
  - d. Animals recovering from surgery are allowed at least 48 hours recovery time prior to transport.
7. Puppies and kittens should be at least eight weeks old at time of transport unless they are being transported with their mother. Puppies and kittens must not be separated from their mother to be transported unless they are weaned. States have differing regulations about age of transport that must be followed. Transfer of orphaned animals under eight weeks old may be justified if resources for proper orphan care are unavailable at the source and can be provided at the destination. In this instance the following conditions will also be met:
  - a. All precautions will be taken during transport to ensure the comfort, health, and safety of the animals, including close monitoring of temperature, maintaining nutrition and hydration requirements, and providing protection from infectious disease exposure.
  - b. The age of the animals and their care requirements must be disclosed to the destination organization prior to transport so that arrangements can be made for appropriate care upon arrival.
  - c. State regulations for interstate transport of animals under eight weeks of age must be followed.
8. Dogs over six months of age in heartworm epidemic areas must be screened for heartworm disease. State regulations must be followed for the import of heartworm positive dogs as some states require a negative test prior to importation.
9. Care must be taken to select behaviorally appropriate animals for transport. Historical behavior information provided to the source organization at the time of relinquishment must be shared with the destination organization. Behavior observed while in the custody of the source organization must be documented and included in the transport census. If conducted, formal behavior assessment results must be disclosed. To qualify for transport, animals should present as pro-social and generally friendly, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon by the source and destination organizations prior to transport: specific behavior conditions identified in animals who otherwise present as appropriate transport candidates (resource guarding, separation anxiety symptoms, etc.) may still be considered for transport at the discretion of the destination organization and such conditions must be written into the transport agreement between the two organizations.
  - a. The source and destination organizations must establish a clear understanding of each organization's evaluation process for determining the behavioral suitability of animals. The agencies must mutually agree on the type of behavior observation and/or assessment utilized, including the manner in which results are recorded and interpreted. Formal behavior assessment results, if conducted, will be documented and included in the animal's file.
10. All transported animals must be sterilized prior to adoption. Sterilization will be done by either the source or destination upon mutual agreement. If animals are sterilized at the source:

- a. Animals may be transported no less than 48 hours after sterilization surgery and only if the animal is free of post-surgical complications.
  - b. Waiting for sterilization should not be a barrier for animals being transported.
12. Transported animals will be accompanied by individual records including a valid Health Certificate, Rabies Certificate, vaccine records, organization health and behavior records results along with any additional, pertinent information on the animal.
  13. Transported animals will be identified with a collar and tag, tape collar, or other definitive means of external physical identification that will tie back to the animals' individual records.

## Land Transport

The following Transport Guidelines are recommended for land transport.

1. Transport vehicles and equipment must be cleaned and sanitized to industry standards prior to transport. Cleaning and sanitation are of the utmost importance for any group housing situation to ensure the safety and health of the animals.
  - a. Use organization cleaning protocols as a guide to set vehicle transport protocols. Also refer to the Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Organizations, published by Association for Shelter Veterinarians, for additional information.
  - b. Ensure use of materials and processes that are appropriate to vehicle surfaces and materials so vehicle interiors can be sterilized between transports.
2. At no time may individual housing units be loaded in such a way that kennel doors directly touch vehicle walls or other kennels. Care must be taken to ensure that kennels are loaded, and that vehicles are constructed in such a way, to ensure adequate airflow and temperature regulation within every individual kennel. The ability to perform a visual check on every animal without having to move or unload any of the kennels must be possible.
3. Proper climate control must be maintained—the vehicle must be able to provide heat and/or air conditioning to the animal housing areas and there must be sufficient air ventilation.
  - a. Temperatures should not fall below 60°F (15.5°C) or above 85°F (29.4°C). A thermometer must be placed in an area where kennels are located and be easily visible.
  - b. Carbon monoxide detectors must be in place where animals are kept during transport.
  - c. All monitors need to be able to be read by the driver or passenger while in transit.
  - d. Appropriate housing must be used for all animals.
4. Animals must be transported in separate enclosures (except in the case of litters) with solid, leak-proof bottoms and adequate bedding. Animals must be able to comfortably stand up, lie down, and turn around.
5. Litters or single juveniles under six months of age must not be mixed.
6. When transporting mixed species, consideration must be given to:
  - a. Separate transport of species is preferred.
  - b. Noise level.
  - c. Visual barriers between the species.

- d. Ensure access to fresh water for every animal at breaks. In warmer months crushed ice is a desirable substitute for water and can be offered in a stable bowl between watering breaks.
  - e. Felines must have access to a space to urinate and defecate for transports longer than two hours. There must be adequate space for a resting area where the cat can stand, sit, and lie in a comfortable, normal position. While on the transport, litterboxes should be used for kittens. Puppy pads may be used as a substitute for adults and are preferred by some organizations. Any felines who are to be housed in the transport crate overnight must be provided with a litter box.
  - f. Felines must be provided a place to hide within their transport kennel or a lightweight enclosure cover that allows sufficient airflow.
  - g. At a minimum, stop every 4-6 hours in a safe area to perform a visual check of animals and, as appropriate, to clean transport kennels and provide water for animals. For puppies and kittens, small amounts of canned food should be provided, otherwise withholding food for adults is appropriate to diminish issues with possible motion sickness, provided animals are fed at least once in a 24-hour period.
  - h. Dogs must be walked or exercised on trips that require an overnight stay or when transport requires dogs moving to a new vehicle/crate. Dogs must be walked at a safe and secure site. This limits stress and ensures safety for the animals. These areas should be policed and left clean after walking dogs.
  - i. Transporting organizations must meet state regulations and Federal Department of Transportation (see references) guidelines to ensure driver safety even if they are not subject to said regulations. All transports should be staffed with sufficient personnel to appropriately handle and care for all animals.
7. Driver, staff, and animal safety is of utmost importance. Factors to consider when staffing transports are:
- a. Drivers must travel with cell phones, maps, preferably GPS, and emergency equipment.
  - b. Distance
  - c. Numbers of animals being transported
  - d. Species being transported (dog, cat, or other)
  - e. Temperament of animals being transported
  - f. Medical status of animals being transported
  - g. Time of day transport is occurring
  - h. Weather – time of year
  - i. Driver training – do drivers, volunteers, staff, or independent contractors have appropriate training and experience to manage the scheduled transport?
  - j. Legal requirements – do the drivers meet the legal licensing and insurance requirements for the method of transport (a class C license (CDL) or DOT medical card if required)?
  - k. Emergency backup plans must be made in advance for all routes used for transport.
  - l. Teams of at least two are required for all transports lasting longer than four hours or for any distance if the vehicle is large and animals cannot easily be monitored by a driver alone.

8. The organizations must have an agreed upon contingency plan to address weather, mechanical, or other unexpected situations that may go awry during the transport.  
Factors to consider:
  - a. Accidents, breakdowns, climate control failure, etc.
  - b. The organization must have a plan to be able to safely and quickly remove all animals from the transport vehicle if necessary.
  - c. A plan must be in place in case of medical emergency for animals or transporters. (Red Cross App shows closest veterinary care)
  - d. A plan and training should be in place to provide emergency first aid.
9. There must be appropriate identification on each animal and its carrier during transport.

### Vehicle Build-out Considerations

There are many factors to consider when building a transport vehicle. These vehicles are expensive to produce and maintain. Care must be taken to properly assess your organization's needs and match that to the structure, capabilities, and available resources to acquire and operate the vehicle. Exhibits B and C will list some of the questions to consider when designing and outfitting a transport vehicle. Depending on the scope of the project, seeking professional help in designing a vehicle is recommended.

### **Air Transport**

All of the KEY ELEMENTS and Transport Guidelines laid out in this document should be adhered to for air transport just as they are for ground transport.

Commercial airlines that fly animals in cargo often have breed or species restrictions (e.g. brachycephalic, bull breeds) for both dogs and cats. Always consult with the airline directly when booking to ensure that the breed(s) being transported are allowed as policies frequently change. International flights have additional considerations that are beyond the scope of this document.

### Considerations for air versus land

- Planes usually stop every four hours to refuel, but animals will not be unloaded while refueling.
  - Animals on flights might not be walked or removed from crates for up to 10 hours so careful consideration should be given before placing animals who need frequent monitoring on flights.
  - Planes are often filled to capacity; therefore, there is no room for walking on board and no time to unload crates until the final destination is reached.
  - Animals cannot be visualized or removed from kennels during flight.
  - Animals on flights must be capable of being safely kenneled for the duration of the transport. They may be in a crate from the time they leave the source to the time they reach their destination.
- Agricultural checks - When required, transporters must meet with any USDA inspectors, undergo required inspections, and pay inspection fees.
- If a land transport will last more than 8 hours, flying is generally preferable if available.
  - The choice of flying versus driving is based on funding, availability, animal comfort, and safety.
  - Transport should not be delayed because air travel is unavailable if animals can

travel by land and be placed sooner.

- Flying animals usually results in shorter transport time which is typically less stressful for animals. Reduced stress makes illness and behavior issues less likely resulting in a shorter length of stay at the destination.
- Animals can travel greater distances in a much shorter amount of time allowing for more options in destinations for adoption.
- Land transports that would cover a distance easily managed by a flight are often unsafe and complicated due to driver fatigue and management of animals and vehicles.
- Humane conditions and stress management should always be paramount when deciding on a mode of transport.

#### Documentation

Just as with land transport, it is imperative that all pets be sent with the proper paperwork including health and rabies certificates. This paperwork must be affixed in a clear plastic sleeve or envelope to the pets' crate. Each crate must be clearly labeled on the outside with the pets' name, ID number, and receiving organization.

Place identification around each pet's neck, identifying the name of the pet and his/her animal identification number. Sometimes pets get separated from their paperwork and this makes it easier for the receiving organization to identify the pets.

#### Food and water

Air transport does not allow frequent stops for walking, feeding, or providing water.

Except when transporting puppies and kittens, pets should not be fed after midnight on the day they are transported. This will help to limit the amount of fecal matter and nausea/vomiting during transport. Pets should be fed as soon as they arrive at the receiving organizations.

When transporting nursing cats, young kittens, or young puppies, attach a food dish in a low position on their crate. Prepare and place slurry in the dish, consisting of canned cat food and water to prevent the kittens from getting hypoglycemia.

On flights longer than two hours in warm temperatures, a water dish or a plastic cup must be attached to each crate filled with crushed ice, so the pet will have water to drink on the flight.

#### Arrival at airport

For commercial flights, transporters must consult with the airline to confirm when animals need to be checked in prior to the flight.

For private flights, before loading pets aboard the plane, all crates must be sorted by size. If the plane is going to multiple destinations, organize the crates by destination. In case of multiple destinations, load the last stop first. The people loading the plane will request crates by size in order to fully utilize the space available. Loading must always be directed by the flight crew.

#### Airport Regulations

For private flights, each airport will have their own regulations (i.e. transport to/from plane) so be familiar with them before the flight departure and arrival.

## Crates

As with land transport, make sure that all crates are secure. Zip ties should be used to secure doors, backs and sides of each crates so they do not pop open midflight. Place absorbent material such as a blanket, towel or puppy pad in each crate.

When sending dogs on commercial airlines, be sure to follow all of the crate guidelines laid out by that airline (i.e., type and size of kennel that can be used, bowls affixed to doors, food affixed to top, etc.).

## Loading the plane

### *Weight*

For commercial flights, the number of crates that can go on each flight is based on a point system determined by the size of the plane. This information will be given to the transporter at the time of booking.

For private flights, the total gross weight must be assessed in advance (accurate weights are crucial for flights).

- The aircraft crew must supervise the loading for the proper weight distribution and maximum weight that can be accommodated by the airplane.
- The transporter is responsible for documenting the weight of all the pets plus the crate (pet weight times 1.12 equals weight of pet and crate) and providing the total weight of the transport to the flight crew the day before the flight.
- A sufficient number of staff and volunteers must always be at the airport to load and unload planes as quickly as possible. Planes can get very hot while the engines are off. Efficient loading and unloading is important.

### *Fueling*

The plane should always be refueled before the plane is loaded to minimize the amount of time animals will be in the plane on the ground.

### *Placement of crates (private flights)*

Follow the same guidelines as for land transport. Place all pets facing either forward or towards the fuselage's wall.

Place nursing mothers, puppies, kittens, and any pets with medical issues in the front row so they can be monitored during the flight. The remainder of the front row should consist of calm dogs.

Arrange crates securely so they do not slide during the flight. If the plane is totally full, chances are the crates will not move too much. If there is an area where there is a pocket without crates and adjacent crates could potentially slide— support those areas by wedging in towels, blankets or empty crates thereby limiting crate movement. To further keep crates from sliding, cargo nets can be used. Be careful to avoid blocking airflow.

### *Other considerations*

If pets are flying on an unpressurized plane, the plane must not go above 8,000 feet.

Airport regulations often prohibit walking dogs between vehicle and airplane; animals should be walked in the airport designated walking area before bringing on the cargo deck.

Ensure that the pilots communicate that they are flying pets as part of their flight plan.

### Weather

All commercial airlines observe seasonal restrictions on pet travel and will not send animals during extreme weather. In general, this includes if the temperature exceeds 80°F (27°C) or if the temperature falls below 20°F (-7°C) while the animal is on the ground at any point in the routing.

For private flights, extreme caution should be used loading on the tarmac if temperatures exceed 75°F (23.9°C), or drop below 32°F (0°C). Loading animals onto the plane should not exceed 45 minutes under these weather conditions and if climate control machinery is available it should be utilized. Alert airport staff in advance that live animals will be loaded on the tarmac and request assistance as needed such as an air conditioning unit for the loading time or a shady area. Discuss take off procedures with the airline crew. If delays are expected, try to mitigate the heat, as the comfort of animal is paramount and they should not sit on a loaded plane for more than 30 minutes without take off if temperatures are above 75°F (23.9°C). This communication must take place with flight crew and air control to ensure the safety of the animals. If the temperature is at or exceeds 85°F (29°C) inside the plane, the plane must not be loaded. Air conditioning carts can be used to cool the plane if needed and available.

### **Transport Hubs**

#### Determining hub capacity and need for transport

It is the responsibility of the hub organization or any destination organization to know and understand their capacity for care and not transport in animals if that would displace local animals and/or crowd or stress the hub facility or staffing. Hub leadership and key staff is to never compromise animal welfare and the ability to care for and keep all organization animals healthy with the main goal of keeping the transport and organization populations separate. The Transfer/Transport Coordinator at the hub is the central source of information from the source to the destination and will monitor the activities of the source agencies to ensure proper preparation of animals to be transported.

The hub is responsible for providing a facility and care for animals who are transported from other agencies through the hub. Minimizing cross contamination and strict practices related to capacity for care are paramount to prevent infectious disease spread and outbreaks. Animals may only enter the hub when there is a clear pathway for timely transport out or local adoption. For animals being transported, their stay at the hub should be 24 hours or less with a preference for same day transport. If the hub will require animals to stay for more than 24 hours, the animals should go to foster care at the source organization until a shorter stay at the hub is possible. Animals may be held longer at the hub if behavioral or medical concerns make transport to the destination unsafe for people or animals.

Organizations serving as hubs must have the means to evaluate medical and behavioral suitability for relocation upon arrival. Such evaluations must be performed by appropriately trained and experienced individuals under veterinary-directed protocol and must occur as close to the time of transportation as is feasible. If animals are deemed unsuitable for relocation, plans must be in place to provide for those animals' needs until they can either be treated to the point of suitability for relocation, returned to the source organization, or humanely euthanized. When making determinations of suitability for relocation, consideration must be given to resource availability at both the hub and the destination as well as requirements to obtain a health certificate for entry into the destination state.

If temporary housing prior to loading the transportation vehicle is necessary, housing and husbandry protocols must be in place and must provide for species-specific housing of suitable size and construction so as to meet basic needs, minimize stress, and minimize disease transmission. Resources must be allocated for the housing and care of such animals and must not detract from those designated for the care of other animals in the sheltering organization. Such temporary housing should be avoided whenever possible through the use of foster homes and strategic scheduling of transports.

Transporting animals from different source populations should be avoided whenever possible to help minimize the transmission of infectious diseases across animal populations. When co-transporting is necessary, steps must be taken to minimize the risk of cross-exposure between such populations. Animals from different source populations must be housed in physically separate compartments when possible. When sharing the same space, animals should be housed in such a way to maintain separation between sub-populations. For example, in larger vehicles, animals from different sources should be housed on opposite sides of the vehicle with an aisle in between. Individual housing units must not face one another or dividers can be put in place. When not possible, a minimum of three feet of space must be maintained between facing housing units and a physical barrier that does not compromise airflow must be installed to prevent direct exposure to some pathogens.

In smaller vehicles where a three-foot-wide aisle is not possible, a narrower walking space must be created either on one side of the vehicle, or in the case when smaller crates are used, orient the crates on one side of the walkway to face sideways and the other side to face forward.

A new veterinary inspection is only necessary if the first health certificate was written where the hub is the final destination and then a secondary destination is decided upon. As long as the certificate is documented within the 30-day window, and the veterinarian who wrote the certificate agrees, the certificate can be modified to include a destination change.

In cases where hubs take animals from several states, all health certificates must be written in the state of origin for the animal. Health certificates cannot be altered in any way without the express permission of the signatory veterinarian.

#### Hubs Work to Support Source Organization(s)

The Transport Coordinator maintains relationships with the source agencies and uses a written report of the animal's health and behavior to insure the source organization is adhering to agreed upon guidelines. A visual yearly re-inspection of each source facility must be performed by hub staff in order to keep source agencies in the program. Visits are also conducted if health



reports indicate any issues or break down in protocols. The hub acts as the gatekeeper for ensuring animals with disease and behavior challenges are not transported unless pre-approved. Hub agencies may need a team of people to support the Transfer/Transport Coordinator to maintain the relationships and the support to source agencies.

### Due Diligence

When managing incoming populations from several source partners, care must be taken to minimize opportunities for cross-contamination between populations. Animals from different sources should arrive at different times and be inspected for obvious signs of infectious disease or unanticipated medical or behavioral conditions. When found, these animals must be deemed ineligible for transport at the current time. Arrangements for further care and transport of such animals must be part of a pre-determined and agreed upon plan that focuses on the animal's comfort and most effective path to a final disposition. This plan may include treatment at the hub, placement in foster care, continuing transport to the destination, or return to the source. The treatment choice must not put other animals at risk.

Organizations acting as a relocation source hub must keep records of animals presented and rejected for transport as well as records of animals who develop disease or behavior issues at the final destination. Such records allow for identification of source organizations that consistently present poor relocation candidates and may signify operational or population-level health risks. This information serves to protect the integrity of the individual relocation program as well as animal relocation initiatives as a whole and can be used to target assistance, intervention, and/or suspension from the relocation program as necessary.

. In order to maintain a constant flow of animals through the hub, source organizations should work with more than one destination partner. Hubs must not admit animals unless an outgoing transport is planned and a destination is secured. A hub should never be acting as an organization for animals from multiple sources. The ultimate purpose of being a transport pass-through should be the primary utilization of a hub. In order to best control disease and maintain a healthy transport population, the hub must be diligent to never go beyond capacity.

---

## EMERGENCY TRANSPORT

Best practices listed above for routine transport are ideal; however, during an emergency they are not always attainable. Animals transported during emergency response are often times the most vulnerable. The following are steps and considerations that should be taken when transporting animals during an emergency situation.

Health Certifications – After a disaster or large-scale animal crisis, surrounding states often times waive the requirement for health certifications for entry. Take the following into consideration:

- As with non-emergency transport, no animal should be transported to a destination where placement of that animal is unlikely.

- Veterinary exams, legally mandated vaccinations, and health certifications must be completed before transport unless a waiver of those requirements have been granted by the State Veterinarian in the destination state.
- If health certifications have been waived by the destination state, a plan must be in place at the destination for isolation, veterinarian exams, parasite control, and vaccines in compliance with normal pre-transport standards.
- Behavior considerations should be the same as with non-emergency transport animals.

The comfort and safety for animals in crisis is paramount. When best practices cannot be followed due to circumstances, the following must be taken into careful consideration.

- The transport vehicle must be safe for animals.
- There must be sufficient airflow.
- Staff/volunteers on the transport must adhere to safety protocols and legal mandates under all circumstances for their safety and the safety of the animals.
- Before departing, animals must be comfortable and safe for the duration of the trip.
- A plan must be in place for animals in distress on the route to the destination.
- During emergency transport, we must use critical thinking combined with best practices to ensure we are providing the best option/outcome for each individual animal.
  - Make certain each animal is healthy and strong enough for the length of the trip.
  - Animals in need of medical care must have a plan to address their specific needs so they can be made comfortable enough to complete the transport.
  - The vehicle must be capable of maintaining a safe temperature for the animals. Transporters must be aware of differences in temperature between the source and destination as these transports are often over long distances and may require temperature controls to be reversed by the end of the trip.

## Deployment

Organizations may only deploy to assist in an emergency if they have been invited to do so by the person/entity in charge of the incident or their designee. Self-deployment causes more harm than good by causing poor communication, mistrust of the animal welfare community, and potentially separating evacuees from their personal pets unnecessarily.

- It is advisable to establish relationships with emergency managers prior to incidents occurring.
- Close contact with authorities and working within established response protocols will build trust and lead to future calls for assistance.
- Emergency managers must account for the animals moved from disaster zones for the purpose of funding, future protocols, and policy and disease management.
- Emergency transporters must complete online FEMA training and Incident Command Training and require all staff/volunteers to do the same.

## **Flexibility**

Emergency transport requires flexibility, always understanding that even the best of plans can be compromised by weather, traffic, fuel crisis, medical emergency, etc.

When responding to a disaster, transporters must work within the incident command system, which may require them to use their resources in ways they had not initially intended when deployed.

## **Collaboration**

It is critical that agencies work together during disasters. Be sure to communicate with local and national groups working in the area. Organizations must understand the structure of the response including any Memorandum of Understandings in place and Incident Command System structure before a disaster happens.

Pets displaced by a disaster should remain local for 30 days in an effort to reunite with their family. When this is not possible, clear instructions must be communicated in local venues explaining where people can go to search for their lost pet.

- Emergency managers may extend the 30-day holding period for these animals, so destinations must have the flexibility to hold animals longer than expected.
- Even after the expiration of the mandated holding period, animals must always be returned to their original owners until they have been legally adopted to a new home.

Animals who are owned by organizations prior to the disaster should have priority for transport so that displaced animals can remain in their communities and be reunited with their owners.

See FEMA links in References and Resources at end of this document.

---

## **ABOVE AND BEYOND BEST PRACTICES**

In some instances, source and destination organizations will have the resources to do more than is required of the Transport Best Practice. In those cases, the recommendations below provide guidance to additional services that can benefit the animal but are not required to meet the Transport Best Practice standard.

1. A Parvovirus titer test may be used to help assess the risk of developing or spreading Parvovirus to a destination organization. Consult with a veterinarian to help with risk assessment and use of titers.
2. Transported animals will receive a microchip for conclusive identification registered to the destination agency.

## FUNDING TRANSPORT

The destination organization must pay or share in the cost of transport programs regardless of the model used.

Destination and source agencies have costs associated with the transport of animals, and it is essential that agencies share the cost. Each organization has a responsibility to put resources into the program. Included in this best practice is a tool to identify and calculate costs associated with transport. Below is a list of the most common fixed costs for consideration when calculating the transport costs per animal and annual per transport.

### Common Fixed Costs

- Labor / Salaries
- Food/Accommodations
- Mileage and Vehicle costs (maintenance, insurance, etc.)
- Animal Care Supplies
  - Medical Supplies
  - Transport Supplies
  - Cleaning Supplies

### Formulas

- $\text{Fixed costs} / \text{number of animals transported} = \text{cost/animal}$
- $\text{Fixed costs} / \text{number of transports} = \text{cost/transport}$

Destination agencies that are not currently investing in the source organization communities in ways other than accepting animals from them, must consider ways in which to provide additional support. Destination agencies should strive to provide support to the source communities by receiving challenging animals with medical treatment needs, behavior modification needs that surpass the resources of the source organizations, or by accepting breeds that can be difficult to place. Destinations must also supplement source agencies financially.

Source agencies are responsible for part or all of the cost of preparing animals for transport. These include the items detailed in the section titled Transportation Preparation and Receipt. Destination agencies may be able to assist with requirements that pose a burden to the source organization and should be negotiated in the MOU.

Though there is no calculated formula or expectation of how cost sharing should occur, it is essential that the destination organization and/or hub work with the source organization to determine the best way to contribute financially. Many source and destination agencies negotiate transfer fees in order for source agencies to supplement the expense of preparation and transportation.

Items to consider funding:

- Preparation costs
- Transportation costs

- Spaying and neutering in the origin community (the funding support is not for use to sterilize organization animals)
- In-kind donations (medical supplies and/or equipment, animal care supplies)
- Employee training
- Scholarships for conference attendance

Third parties that facilitate transports between organizations are in a unique position working directly with the origin organizations when the receiving organization may not be involved or have a relationship with the origin organization. In this case, it is the third party who must facilitate getting resources back to the origin communities. Ultimately, transport programs are one solution to a multi-pronged societal problem and our goal is to resolve the problem in all communities. Transport programs are otherwise a temporary fix for communities that have not yet reduced their animal populations.

---

## GOALS AND MEASUREMENT OF THE TRANSPORT BEST PRACTICES

### Goals

1. Our ultimate goal is to cumulatively save more lives.
2. Foster open relationships between source and destination agencies to help both improve operations and reduce the need for transport.
3. Improve the quality of transfers that occur by minimizing animal stress and disease transmission.
4. Ensure that transport programs are conducted in a manner that fully embraces and meets or exceeds all local, state, and federal regulations pertaining to public health and animal safety.
5. Promote transport best practices to achieve the above.
6. Collect data on transports (outcomes, health, behavior, number of animals, and number of transports as examples).
  - a. Data collected should be used to guide decision making and program direction for transport.

### Measurements

The Association believes it is important to monitor the use of these best practices and we propose to do this through regular member surveys.

1. Do members participate in animal transport?
2. If so, are members a source or destination organization?
3. Have members heard of or read The Association transport best practice?
4. Did the member organization adopt some or all of this best practice?
  - a. If yes, which practices have been adopted?
  - b. Were there obstacles that prevented the member from fully utilizing the best practice and if so what are they?
    - i. If yes, what were the obstacles?
5. The frequency of transports, average number of animals per transport, and the number of animals transported annually.

6. What animals are you transporting in/out?
    - a. And how many each month (to gauge the seasonal nature of transport)?
  7. What transport model do you perform?
  8. How is transport funded?
  9. Who does your transports (drives the vehicles) – Staff, volunteers, private 3<sup>rd</sup> party transporter?
  10. What does the destination medically and/or behaviorally require prior to accepting transport?
  11. Do destination agencies return animals to the source organization if they will be euthanized?
    - a. Is this required by the source organization?
  12. Does the destination provide the source support beyond accepting transports, and if so, what?
  13. How do you manage transport data collection and what is shared from the source to the destination and from the destination to the source?
  14. Do you have a formalized behavior assessment protocol? If not, what criteria are utilized for selecting animals?
  15. For destination agencies: Do you track animal outcomes for animals received through transport?
- 

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

***Provision of Veterinary Care in a Shelter Setting Best Practices***, The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement: <https://theaawa.org/general/custom.asp?page=Bestpractice>

***Organization Dog Behavior Assessment***, ASPCA: <https://www.asPCA.org/about-us/asPCA-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-shelter-dog-behavior-assessments>

### Canadian Specific

***Animal Welfare Criminal Code***, Humane Canada Provincial Legislation: [https://www.humanecanada.ca/provincial\\_legislation](https://www.humanecanada.ca/provincial_legislation)

***Incident Command System***, ICS Canada: <http://www.icscanada.ca/>

***Rabies Vaccination***, Canadian Immunization Guide: Part 4 - Active Vaccines <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-4-active-vaccines/page-18-rabies-vaccine.html>

### United States Specific

***Administration of Rabies Vaccination Laws***, Association of Veterinary Medicine: <https://www.avma.org/Advocacy/StateAndLocal/Pages/rabies-vaccination.aspx>

**Animal Welfare Act**, USDA, National Agricultural Library:  
<https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/animal-welfare-act>

**Department of Transportation Regulations, Title 49, Part 395**, US Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration: <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/title49/part/395>

**Introduction to Incident Command System**, US Federal Emergency Management Administration: <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-100.c>

**Incident Command System for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents**, US Federal Emergency Management Administration:  
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-200.b>

**National Incident Management System Introduction**, US Federal Emergency Management Administration:  
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-700.b>

**Pet Animal Care Facilities Act** – Colorado Air Transport Guidelines (No federal oversight from the FAA): <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/aginspection/pacfa>

**State Regulations for Importing Animal**, USDA Animal and Plant Inspection Service:  
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-and-animal-product-import-information/import-live-animals/us-state-and-territory-animal-import-regulations>

---

## GLOSSARY

**Behavior Assessment** – *A Behavior Assessment is a method of information gathering regarding an animal's behavior that can be utilized as part of the decision making process to determine adoption candidacy. Behavior Assessments refer to formal assessments developed by credentialed individuals and must be conducted in a consistent manner true to the author's design. Behavior Assessments may be different from Behavior Evaluations, which may include behavior assessments, and/or general behavior observations, historical perspective, and other strategies in combination to determine an animal's adoption candidacy.*

**Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI), aka Health Certificate** - *An official document issued by a federal, state, tribal, or accredited veterinarian certifying that the animals identified on the document have been inspected and were found to satisfy the regulations pertaining to their intended movement – within the same state, between states, or internationally.*

**Destination**– *Organization that receives animals transported from a source organization. Transferred animals supplement adoption program population and do not infringe upon the resources and placement opportunities available to local community of animals.*

**Hub (Transport Hub Organization)** – *Transport hubs or hub agencies serve as transfer points to get animals to their final destination. It is part of a hub-and-spoke system that provides temporary housing of animal populations that may or may not originate from several source agencies. Organizations that function as hubs must be very experienced in managing transported animals and comply with the best practices.*

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** – *A written agreement between two agencies to establish and define expectations as said agencies embark on a partnership. MOU'S are established out of mutual respect to help groups adhere to their commitments to one another throughout their professional relationship.*

**Multi-Source Transports** – *Transporting animals from different source populations on the same transport vehicle to one or more destinations.*

**Population Imbalance** (also referred to as: community imbalance) – *There is a greater number of animals surrendered to a local organization(s) than there are individuals adopting animals in a community. Or, there are a greater number of individuals wanting to adopt than there are animals available for placement through the organization(s) in a community.*

**Resources** – *Availability and access to a pool of services and assets that contribute to the network that provides care to the animals in an organization's charge, including but not limited to financial support, staff availability, volunteer programs, veterinary services, behavioral expertise, and housing accommodations.*

**Hub** - *Also called an Aggregator. An organization responsible for providing a facility and care for animals who are transported from other agencies through a single facility on their way to their final destination. Multiple sources and destinations will have relationships with a hub. Hubs will assist source organizations with funding and support to reduce the need for transport. Transport could be done by either the source or destination organization, or a third party.*

**Source Organization** – *Organization from which transport animals originate. A source organization needs transport opportunities for animals to provide immediate relief due to population imbalance and/or inadequate resources to address the medical or behavioral conditions of transport candidates.*

**Third Party Transporter** – *Unaffiliated third party paid or unpaid providing the service of transportation between source and destination agencies. Provides care and complies with the best practices for animals during transport; does not provide services for transport candidates prior to transport or after arrival at the destination organization. May or may not involve the transport of animal populations from several source agencies to one or more destination agencies.*

**Transfer/Transport Coordinator** – *Communicates with and monitors relationships with partner organizations (either source or destination agencies) and coordinates the transfer of animals into or out of the organization. Maintains paperwork on each transported animal. Assists organization staff with selection of animals for the program.*



**Trained Animal Care Professional** – *An individual who is under the direct or indirect supervision of a licensed veterinarian and deemed qualified to conduct a physical exam and provide prescribed treatment.*

**Transport** – *The physical act of relocating animals from a source organization to a destination organization.*

**Waystation** – *Transport waystations are used as a rest stop over for animals (and drivers) on long distance transport. Ideally, waystations only house one transport vehicle of animals at a time.*