

The Association for  
**Animal Welfare  
Advancement**



**COMPANION ANIMAL TRANSPORT PROGRAMS BEST PRACTICES  
PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement (The Association) is a professional association, serving a community of individuals committed to excellence in the management and operation of animal welfare, care and control organizations. Through the active involvement and contributions of industry professionals, we provide the practical knowledge, resources and solutions professionals need to grow, achieve the goals of their organizations, and, collectively, advance the animal welfare profession.

Transport programs are integral to serving the needs of companion animals. Supply and demand dictates the peril of healthy animals who are not a danger to the public or other animals. Transport programs provide a second chance to animals living in overcrowded communities and also provide companions in communities with and under-abundance of homeless animals.

To better assist the industry with this challenge, leaders of The Association have developed ***Companion Animal Transport Best Practices*** and additional tools and resources. These are not minimum standard guidelines, but rather best practices for our industry to achieve.

Download these guidelines for your community and transport network at  
<http://www.TheAAWA.org/page/BestPractices>

**Key Guidelines**

To establish a standard of care, practice of companion animal transport must:

- Support the five freedoms for animals (see description on back of this fact sheet);
- Ensure public safety;
- Minimize risk of disease and safeguard veterinary best practices;
- Adhere to local, state, and national laws; and
- Base guidelines on accepted methods of care.

**Background**

Companion Animal Transport Best Practices were initially developed in October 2015. They have been updated twice (June 2016 and March 2019) to reflect innovation, expansion, evolving transport collaboration models, and to continue to meet key guidelines. The Association leadership is dedicated to continually update all of the industry best practices.

# The Five Freedoms for Animals

The Five Freedoms are internationally accepted standards of care that affirm every living being's right to humane treatment. These standards were developed by Britain's Farm Animal Welfare Council in 1965 and adapted by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians for companion animals in shelters. Embracing the Five Freedoms supports the health and welfare of the animals in our care and provides adopters with the best possible insight into their personalities. That ultimately leads to more animals successfully placed in loving homes.

The Five Freedoms ensure that we meet the mental and physical needs of animals in our care:

1. **Freedom from hunger and thirst** by ready access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigor. This must be specific to the animal. For example, puppies, adult dogs, pregnant cats, and senior cats all need different types of food provided on different schedules.
2. **Freedom from discomfort** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area. This means you should provide soft bedding and an area with appropriate temperature, noise levels, and access to natural light. If an animal is outside, it must have shelter from the elements as well as appropriate food and water bowls that will not freeze or tip over.
3. **Freedom from pain, injury, or disease** by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment. This includes vaccinating animals, monitoring animals, physical health, treating any injuries and providing appropriate medications.
4. **Freedom to express normal behavior** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the animal's own kind. Animals need to be able to interact with — or avoid — others of their own kind as desired. They must be able to stretch every part of their body (from nose to tail), and run, jump, and play. This can be particularly challenging when animals are housed in individual kennels.
5. **Freedom from fear and distress** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering. The mental health of an animal is just as important as its physical health — as psychological stress can quickly transition into physical illness. These conditions can be achieved by preventing overcrowding and providing sufficient enrichment and safe hiding spaces.