

COVID 19 Transport Amendment

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Introduction

In the constantly changing COVID-19 environment, The Association’s Best Practices and Emerging Trends Committee has added an amendment to the previously published Transport Best Practice. This amendment provides new guidelines for Transport Programs that include alternative methods that take into consideration social distancing policies as well as animal and transporter safety.

Adhering to social distancing policies and mandates set forth by state and local government is vital to ensuring the health and wellbeing of animals and the humans who care for them. The Association recognizes that animal transport has become a necessary means to achieve positive outcomes for animals and that some organizations rely on them considerably. Providing this amendment aims to support lifesaving outcomes while observing necessary safety measures related to COVID-19.

Terms:

- Source Shelter – Refers to the shelter sending the animals
- Destination Shelter – Refers to the shelter receiving the animals

Prior to arrival (at destination shelter/rescue):

All dogs and cats must meet importation requirements stipulated by law and transporters must understand the CDC Guidelines and adhere to the protocols in place for COVID-19. Transporters must also check any state executive orders to ensure compliance. In addition to those stipulations, source organization pets who have been housed in foster homes, transporters and all parties involved in the transport, must ask the following questions prior to transport. If the answer to any of the below questions is yes, the pet must be considered ineligible for the transport:

1. Have you or any members of your household felt sick in the last 14 days?
2. Have you or any members of your household had contact with anyone with confirmed COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
3. Has the pet(s) shown any of the following symptoms within the past 14 days?
Cough, Nasal or Eye Discharge, Difficulty breathing, Loss of Appetite, Lethargy

Source shelter responsibilities:

- Source shelters must adhere to proper social distancing rules when preparing for transport and loading and unloading, including the use of proper PPE.
- Ideally, only 2 transporters or the least amount possible for safety will participate in the transport and are from the same household, shelter team or social circles to minimize risk of transmission.
- Transporters will prepare all paperwork in advance of transport and must be sent electronically from source to destination shelter.
- Source shelter must ensure animal safety and not overcrowd when in transport – please refer to The Association’s Transport Best Practices document for guidelines.

Destination shelter responsibilities:

- Destination shelters must adhere to proper social distancing rules when receiving transport and unloading the animals including the use of proper PPE.
- Destination shelter should take measures to ensure animal safety when transport arrives including proper unloading techniques as outlined below and in a closed secure space when possible.

Transport process:

Prior to transport:

- All required documentation must be sent electronically from source to destination shelter.
- Establish a mutually agreed upon PPE protocol for area in which the transport partners will meet.

During transport:

- Transporters must wear proper PPE including masks and gloves when they exit the vehicle.
- If someone develops symptoms on the way to the destination shelter, they must turn around and abort the transport.
- Anyone touching a crate must wear gloves before bringing their crates to the vehicle; same for unloading crates at the destination shelter.
- Animal transports planned in areas currently experiencing an outbreak should be postponed for a later date.
- Transporters should minimize stops and avoid stopping in hotspot areas. For information on known hotspots please refer to CDC.
 - Social/Physical Distancing:
 - Transporters must adhere to 6 feet social distancing rules with other people.
 - Transporters should maintain appropriate social distancing if from different households or social circles. The passenger can sit in the backseat, avoid touching the same surfaces, wash hands before and after getting in the vehicle and regularly disinfect any touchpoints in the car. Despite best efforts, the two transporters are likely to cross contaminate given the proximity within vehicles.

Upon arrival:

- Source shelter transporters stay in the vehicle or be able to adhere to social distance requirements while destination shelter staff unloads pets.
- One destination shelter staff member at a time unloads the crates.
- If the crate weight is unsafe for a single person to lift alone, the animal must be friendly enough to be safely removed from the crate and leash walked inside.
- Cats should be taken to a secure area as close as possible to the entrance and removed from source shelter's carriers and placed in destination shelter's carrier. Crate transfer area must be disinfected immediately following use.

- Any animals exhibiting upper respiratory symptoms, lethargy or fever upon arrival must be immediately segregated from rest of the population and the manager and veterinarian notified.
- If dogs and cats are going to 'fosters' homes upon transport arrival, facilitate a "drive-through" style pick-up where the pet is brought out to their car. People can stay in their vehicle if they can maintain a 6 foot distance from the organization's representative (ie: larger vehicles such as SUVs where the back door can be opened). For smaller vehicles, the person may need to stand outside their car while the animal is loaded to maintain at least 6 feet from the organization's representative and the car inhabitants.
- Facilitate intake exams and any necessary vaccinations, preventatives etc. with the car owners waiting outside, in order to minimize any congregation in the shelter unnecessarily.

Quarantine requirements:

- Adhere to all state quarantine laws.
- If a pet is showing COVID-19 related symptoms, consult a veterinarian immediately to determine a quarantine period. Symptoms may include respiratory as well as possible GI concerns. For a complete list refer to the CDC guidelines for symptoms

Airline protocol for flights

- Each shelter representative must adhere to proper social distancing rules when preparing for transport and loading and unloading, including the use of proper PPE.
- Ideally, transporters are from the same household or social circles to minimize risk of transmission.
- Each participating shelter must ensure that any personnel with any symptoms of respiratory disease (sore throat, cough, fever) or living with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 stays home.
- If someone develops symptoms on the way to the airport, they must remain in the vehicle throughout the loading or unloading.
 - Transporters who become sick must refrain from coughing or sneezing directly towards other humans and animals.
- All personnel must wear facemasks, face covering and disposable examination gloves.

- Anyone touching a crate must wear gloves before bringing their crates to the plane; same for unloading crates at the destination airport.
- Each shelter representative will remain at or near their vehicles on the tarmac to reduce social gathering and maintain social distancing.
- Each shelter should touch only their own crates. Do not move crates that belong to another shelter.
- **Only two shelter representatives will hand crates up to load into plane, as requested. These are the only people other than the plane's crew who will handle multiple shelter's crates. Same approach for unloading.**
- All pets must be crated with proper paperwork firmly secured to the top of each crate before entering the airport's grounds.
- Do not crate or add paperwork on the tarmac.
- Ensure that all crates have water cups attached before bringing the dogs to the tarmac.
- After all crates have been loaded, discard examination gloves in the trash, wash your hands with soap and water, and/or apply hand sanitizer.
- Do not leave until the plane has taken off or instructions have been given about leaving the loading and unloading areas.

Supplies

In order to maintain sanitation transporters must have the following supplies on hand during transports and travel to/from airport or destination shelter:

- PPE (facial coverings and gloves, at minimum)
- Disinfectant that is effective against non-enveloped viruses
- Disposable cloths or wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- Hand soap
- Extra water for handwashing (mark container "for hand washing")

References and Resources:

- CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
- The Association – Companion Animal Transport Best Practices <https://theaawa.org/page/Bestpractice>