

Pet-Friendly Move Checklist

Moving home is stressful for everyone - and pets feel it too. From dogs and cats to rabbits, birds, and beyond, our animal companions are highly sensitive to changes in routine and environment. For families planning an international move, the challenges multiply: travel regulations, paperwork, long journeys, and new surroundings all need to be carefully managed.

The good news? With preparation, patience, and the right support, relocating with pets can be a smooth, safe, and even positive experience. This checklist guides you through each stage of a pet-friendly move abroad - helping to keep tails wagging and feathers unruffled along the way.

Before the Move

International moves involve far more logistics and paperwork than domestic moves. Ideally, begin your preparations at least 3-6 months in advance.



Vet check-up

Book a full health check at least three months before your move. Your vet will:

- Confirm your pet is fit to travel.
- Update vaccinations and provide documentation required for international entry.
- Issue a health certificate, usually within 10 days of travel (regulations vary by country).

If your pet requires medication, ask for an adequate supply to cover the move and early settling-in period.



Regional Regulations

- **Europe:** Pets entering the EU must be microchipped, vaccinated against rabies, and have an EU [Animal Health Certificate](#). Some countries require tapeworm treatment for dogs.
- **US:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) mandates rabies vaccinations for dogs and recommends health certificates for cats. Rules vary by state, so check both federal and local requirements.
- **APAC:** Regulations can be stricter, with quarantine periods in countries like Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. Plan well in advance - applications and testing may take months.



Microchip & ID tags

Ensure your pet is microchipped and registered with up-to-date details. Collars should carry an ID tag with your new contact number, ideally including an international dialling code.



Travel arrangements

Airlines, ferries, and pet relocation services all have different rules. Research early to understand:

- Approved carriers and crate dimensions.
- Seasonal restrictions (some airlines won't fly pets in extreme heat or cold).
- Whether pets travel in the cabin or cargo hold.
- Pet-friendly hotel options if stopovers are required.



Familiar comforts

Set aside favourite toys, bedding, or blankets. These items carry a reassuring scent that will help your pet feel secure during travel.



Plan safe spaces

On packing days, pets are often unsettled by strangers and noise. Arrange for them to stay with friends, at a kennel, or in a quiet room away from the activity.

Packing & Preparation



Pet essentials box

Create a dedicated kit with enough supplies for at least a week:

- Food and water bowls.
- Leads, harnesses, or litter trays.
- Medications and vet records.
- Toys, bedding, and grooming supplies.
- Waste bags, cleaning supplies, or litter.
- Keep this box with you rather than on the moving van or in cargo.



Secure carriers & Crates

Invest in a crate that meets international travel regulations. It should be large enough for your pet to stand, turn, and lie down comfortably, with secure ventilation. Introduce it early so your pet associates it with safety rather than stress.



Reduce stress

Stick to normal feeding and walking routines as much as possible in the run-up to the move. Familiarity helps offset the disruption happening around them.



Avoid packing pet items too early

Keep beds, toys, and bowls in place until the last moment. These familiar items provide stability while the rest of the home changes.

Moving Day



Safe zone

During the chaos of moving day, keep pets in a secure, quiet space with food, water, and bedding. This prevents escape, injury, or distress. If possible, leave them with a trusted friend or boarding facility.



Hydration & breaks

For long journeys, plan rest stops. Dogs need regular bathroom breaks and water, while smaller animals may need a quiet pause to de-stress.



Avoid last-minute surprises

Don't let pet carriers end up in the removal lorry by accident. Keep them with you, ready for travel, along with their paperwork and supplies

Settling In



Unpack their things first

Set up food bowls, beds, and toys as soon as you arrive. These familiar items help signal to your pet that this is now "home."



Maintain routines

Feed and walk at the same times as before. Consistency reassures pets and helps them adapt more quickly to their new environment.



Explore Slowly

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Check the garden

Before letting pets roam outdoors, ensure fences and gates are secure. Check for hazards such as gaps, chemicals, or wildlife risks. You should keep your cats indoors for at least two to four weeks after moving to a new home, giving them time to settle and begin to see the new space as safe and familiar. The exact timeframe may vary depending on the cat, but this adjustment period is essential to stop them from becoming disoriented or attempting to return to their previous territory.



Update details

- Register with a local vet as soon as possible.
- Update your address on the microchip database.
- In some countries, you'll also need to register your pet with local authorities.

A Smooth Move for the Whole Family

Relocating abroad with pets takes careful planning, but with the right checklist, it doesn't need to be overwhelming. From health certificates to travel crates and familiar comforts, each step plays a role in keeping your pets safe, calm, and comfortable.

At Doree Bonner International, we understand that pets are part of the family. That's why our [tailored moving services](#) are designed to support every aspect of your relocation. With over a century of experience helping families relocate worldwide, we make sure the transition is as smooth as possible for you, so you can take care of more important matters, like caring for your pets.