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## You can take it with you

Local News

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Adopting a pet is a commitment for the life of the pet, not just for the length of the owner's stay in Cayman. However, many pet owners surrender their pets to the Humane Society or try to find other homes for them on the Island when they leave, rather than trying to take the pets with them.

"Can our consumerist society really have reached a point where we want a companion for the time we are away from home, but don't feel the commitment to that companion to take them with us or leave them well cared for?" asks Lesley Agostinelli of Cayman Animal Rescue Enthusiasts, a group intimately involved in animal welfare issues in Cayman.

The Cayman Islands Humane Society shelter on North Sound road had to deal with so many surrenders recently that the shelter had to stop taking in new animals in order to give the animals already there a better chance at being adopted. Although surrendering the animal is definitely a better option than abandoning it, taking a pet along when relocating is

definitely the best option for the pet.

According to Dr. Brenda Bush of Island Veterinary Services, travelling with a pet just requires a bit of planning.

"It may not be an easy process but it's a very doable process to take them with you. The minute you adopt a pet, if you know you are not going to be here forever, then you should look into how you are going to travel with your pet," says Bush.

CARE deals with a lot of animal transfers, not only assisting people with information on taking their pets with them when they leave Cayman, but also with puppy transfers to shelters in the United States.

"We are constantly getting e-mails to help seek homes for animals when people are leaving or asking for advice on transporting pets. It is actually quite an easy process to ship your pets with you as long as you are prepared for the costs and the process," says Agostinelli.

Apart from the financial aspect of travel, many pet owners are concerned about the impact the travel could have on the health of their pets, especially when it comes to travelling with geriatric pets.

"We help our clients get their pets ready for travel all the time. I have not had any horror stories of any problems with travel or animals getting injured or sick. Even with the geriatric animals, because that's a concern for a lot of people. If their animal is elderly they really worry about whether they should make the animal make the trip," says Bush.

According to Bush, it would be much harder on the animal to be left behind, even if the owners find a good home for it.

Rules for importing animals can vary dramatically from country to country. However, in general the pet will require a rabies shot, which has to be administered by the Department of Agriculture. Many countries require that the pet be microchipped prior to the rabies shot, and even in cases where this may not be required, microchipping is a good idea as this allows for the easy identification of the pet should it ever become separated from its owner.

"As early as 12 weeks of age the animal can start having the rabies injections. We microchip them first, then they start rabies injections. Once their titer is appropriate all they have to have is a rabies booster routinely and they're titer tested every two years. You keep that paperwork up and they can travel pretty much any time," says Bush.

The animal will also need a clean bill of health from the veterinarian in order to certify that it is fit to travel. The animal will usually have to travel within 14 days of the certificate being issued.

Depending on the country involved, it may be necessary for the animal to spend some time in quarantine once it arrives in its new home country as well.

"There are special cases for animals going to New Zealand, Australia and the UK that can be a little bit more time consuming in terms of getting the animal ready, but it's very doable and if

you know for sure you're not going to be here for all your life, then start getting your animal ready for travel," says Bush.

However, travel to the United States and Canada is much easier on pet owners.

It is also important to check whether there are any breed bans in effect in the country you intend to travel to, as it might be impossible to take your dog with you if it falls on that list.

For people intending to travel with their dogs, it is also very important to check that the dog will be allowed back in Cayman, as breed banning is in effect here. That means that in some cases dogs may be allowed out of the country, but due to the breed ban they will not be allowed back in.

"We've had some major problems with that with animals that get medical referrals for specialist care, where they will let them go but they will not let them come back," says Bush.

Airlines also have greatly varied regulations when it comes to travelling with pets. Some airlines do not allow any pets to travel on their international routes, while others will only allow pets to travel as cargo, not in the cabin or as checked luggage.

Most airlines allow pets in the cabin, as long as the pet is a cat or small dog that can comfortably be transported in a hard sided carrier with dimensions not exceeding 19 inches long by 13 inches wide by 9 inches high. However, this can vary depending on the route and the airline, as different types of aircraft can accommodate different sized carriers. Soft sided carriers are allowed to exceed these dimensions slightly as they are collapsible. These dimensions are so that the carrier can fit under the seat in front of the passenger. The total weight of the pet and carrier should not exceed 20 pounds.

The cost for taking a pet along as carry on varies from \$100 to \$200 depending on airline and route. Most airlines will not allow more than one pet per paying passenger, while some also have a limit on the total numbers of pets that will be allowed as carry-on in the aircraft, so it is vital to contact the reservations desk and ensure that there is room available for your pet, as pet carriage is on a first come first served basis. The pet will count as a piece of carry-on baggage.

The cost of transporting a pet as checked baggage is higher than transporting as hand luggage, but is vital for bigger pets. However, for transport as checked baggage, pets have to be housed in a hard-sided carrier.

It is also important to note that most airlines have temperature restrictions in place for transporting pets as checked baggage. If the temperature that the pet will be exposed to outside is expected to exceed 85 degrees on any leg of the journey on the day of travel, or drops below 45 degrees, pets will not be accepted. This means that planning when to travel with a pet can be very important when the pet is too big to be handled as hand luggage.

When a pet has to be transported as cargo, as is required by some airlines, the cost can be considerably higher. However, if owners plan ahead the shock of travel expenses should not be as great and the whole family can move to a new home together.