

## it's all in the box !

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It's just a box, right? Wrong!

Welcome to the not-entirely-simple [world of travel boxes](#) for your pet's pending travels. What follows is primarily for those of you who have never relocated your pet before and is intended to help you gain a little (a lot?) more understanding about your pet's travel box needs. It's written primarily with exports from the UAE in mind, but even if you're in another country using another agent getting ready to relocate into the UAE, or even just looking for general help shipping from wherever to wherever, then perhaps you'll find this equally useful.

And if you know all this stuff already... maybe we'll offer you a job!

Now, in brief, here's what you need to know:

**IATA Standards:** Your pet has to travel in an IATA-standard (International Air Transport Association, [www.iata.org](http://www.iata.org)) travel box in order to be accepted by the airline (and us, of course!).

*The IATA Live Animals Regulations are the worldwide standards for transporting live animals by commercial airlines. The objective of the IATA Live Animals Regulations is to ensure ALL animals are transported safely and humanely by air. It is an established fact that carriage of live animals by air is the most humane and expedient method of transportation over long distances.*

The travel box:

- should be made of sufficiently strong materials, especially for some very strong breeds of dog;
- must have appropriate and safe ventilation;
- should allow your pet, most importantly, sufficient room within which to comfortably stand up, lie down and turn around... all with ease... but not large enough to body surf in!

**International Standards for Wood Packaging Material:** But that's not all, folks! As if it weren't enough that you have to have an engineering degree just to choose the right travel box for your pet, there also exists regulations with regard to the type of wood your wooden travel box is made of, IF indeed you decide to use wood at all! (There are other materials as well! ...read on.)

These standards require that if your pet's travel box is made either in part or in whole of unmanufactured/unprocessed wood (e.g. including lumber but not ply), then the entire box must be either heat-treated or fumigated with methyl bromide, and then officially stamped on the outside of the box to certify this treatment, before entering any participating country. And which countries are participating? Well, pretty much any country you are likely to be travelling to... and the list is growing. Currently the list includes the United States, Brazil, the European Union, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. Just so you know, in order to avoid this entire problem, DKC makes all of its wooden travel boxes entirely out of strong, high-quality plywood, including the support frame and surfaces.

## what size for my flying travel box?

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Before you continue reading, make sure you have our document called "[Illustration of Measuring Your Dog](#)". If you don't have it already, you can download it here: [http://www.dkc.ae/docs/Illustration\\_of\\_Measuring\\_Your\\_Dog.pdf](http://www.dkc.ae/docs/Illustration_of_Measuring_Your_Dog.pdf).

You may or may not need (or want!) our help with your relocation but in either case this illustration will help you a lot. As you can see, it shows exactly which measurements you need to take of your dog so that you get a travel box that fits him or her well; not too small, not too large.

And if it's a cat you're relocating? Well, in almost all cases (but not all), cats take a standard 61 x 40 x 41cms Luxx-Aire polypropylene travel box. If he or she is a *really* BIG cat or a brachycephalic (a snub-nosed breed, to you and me!), then you will require a larger size ~ we can talk you through this too.

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Now ideally, even with the help of the illustration document and your own measurements of your dog, we would like to see you personally if



you think you might like to use our services. We've learned over the years that the very best and most reliable measurements are taken at our place with our trained staff, and at the same time we can show you the various types of travel box we offer (DKC-made wooden and Luxx-Aire and PetMate SkyKennel or VariKennel polypropylene boxes) and the cost implications of each (the cost of the travel box is only part of the story ~ the size of the travel box directly affects the cost of the airline charges for your pet's flight). And if you already have your own travel box, even for a cat, we always like to see it just to make sure it meets airline standards for safety and specs.

However, if coming to us is not possible at this stage, or if you just want to handle the whole thing yourself, then you definitely need to know a thing or two about how to measure your pet properly. And we'll need these measurements from you if you want us to help you by email or over the phone with estimates for your shipment.

So, follow the instructions in the illustration document. The best way to do the measuring is for two people to work together ~ one gently-but-firmly holding your dog under the belly in a standing position and otherwise manoeuvring your dog into the different necessary measuring positions, while the other handles your trusty tape measure, pencil and the printed out illustration or other piece of paper

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And that's it!

Well... almost. :-)

If you do want us to handle either choosing/making your travel box or indeed the entire shipment, then all we need are these numbers in order to be able to give you an estimate. (Although please note that until we've actually seen your pet and his/her travel box, we can give you only an estimate at this stage because it requires our visual, personal confirmation before we can be absolutely certain that the measurements have been taken correctly.)

If, however, you are going to get your own travel box, either pre-manufactured or wooden, then these measurements are not quite the end of your hard work ~ what you have now are the dimensions of your pet but not of the actual size of the travel box; remember, your pet needs space inside that box, so you need to add additional centimetres to the measurements you've taken when assessing travel box sizes. Probably predictably, it is difficult to be precise about what these additional centimetres should be. Generally, use the measurements you now have for your pet and:

- Add 5cm to the height to get the height of the travel box.
- Add half of the front-leg length to get the required length for the travel box, but add no less than 10cm. In other words, the length of the travel box needs to be <full length of pet + half-length of front leg OR 10cm, whichever is greater>. This will ensure that your pet can lie down comfortably.
- Double the measurement of the width of your pet to get the width for the travel box. This will ensure, very importantly, that it will be possible for your pet turn around inside the box with ease.

Phew!

If you have a travel box already, that's great. Just remember the preceding information we've given you about wooden boxes. Also, if you're going to use our services, we need to repeat that we will need to see your pet and his/her travel box to make sure it's sufficiently strong, safe and, very importantly, that it's the right size. If it's too small, your pet will simply not be able to travel in it. If it's too big, not only will it cost you a lot more for the air waybill (we'll explain why further on) but it's just not safe. We're sure you can imagine how uncomfortable (or even painful!) it might be to be thrown around during turbulence, or generally when being moved, and not being able to support yourself.

## **boxing clever**

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Instead of only introducing your pet to his or her travel box at the time of travel, we recommend that you let him or her get used to the box prior to the journey by keeping it around the house for at least a couple of weeks (even longer wouldn't hurt). Let him or her explore it and test it out without ever being forced. Try putting his or her favourite blanket or toy inside and even the occasional treat. Slowly, in almost all cases, your pet will become very used to being inside the box, even comfortable enough to sleep inside it, even if you shut the door for short periods of time. Eventually, perhaps even quickly, you'll be able to put your pet inside when you need him or her to be there without creating any undue anxiety. Developing this familiarity may well help to reduce any stress he or she might feel when it finally comes time to travel.

### **Boxing with DKC**

We can manufacture for your pet a made-to-measure, IATA-standard, entirely-ply, wooden travel box, or we can supply an airline-approved polypropylene Luxx-Aire, VariKennel or SkyKennel.

Our high-quality, long-lasting wooden travel boxes are made of strong plywood with steel-meshed front door and steel-meshed windows on the sides. The boxes we build are solid and stable, are fully compliant with all international and airline requirements (even exceeding some requirements), and they are also slightly raised from the floor with skids to ensure dryness from damp floors. The end result is a secure, warm, dry and cosy environment.



Luxx-Aire, VariKennels and SkyKennels are lightweight, portable kennels made of durable polypropylene. Although more costly, they can be used for almost any pet travel needs ~ whether off to Timbuktu or simply the local veterinarian. Being able to dismantle them into two parts also makes them easy to store.

Although ultimately the choice as to which type of box to use is almost always yours (some airlines have more specific requirements), it is a good idea to decide how your pet will travel right through to the final destination before deciding which is the best box for your pet. This is due to the difference in how the cost for the flight is calculated (we'll tell you more about that in a minute); the fact that some airlines don't accept wooden boxes on their flights; and that you may be travelling all or part of your journey with your pet booked as accompanied baggage and not cargo.

### Snuggly Rugs

We like to fit all our travel boxes with what we call "Snug-Rugs" to ensure pets travel and arrive as comfortably and as dry as possible. Thick and soft, not only is a Snug-Rug s-e-e-e-e-r-i-o-u-s-l-y comfortable, it's also unique (for more information, go to [www.vetbed.co.uk/cats/vetbed\\_gold.html](http://www.vetbed.co.uk/cats/vetbed_gold.html)). And just so you know, it stays in very good condition wash after wash after wash after wash... well, you get the picture. And how different is *that* to using the pages of your local, oops-now-it's-soggy, daily newspaper underneath your pet?!

As we cut "Snug-Rugs" to size, even if you already have a travel box, just let us know the dimensions and we can supply you a Snug-Rug as needed.

### share and share a-dis-like

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Not very often, but indeed every now and then, we are asked if same-family pets can share the same travel box for their relocation. Well, we *strongly* recommend *against* this practice except in the case of quite young puppies and kittens. You see, the reality is that no matter how well your pets get along, putting two animals together in a very enclosed and restricted space can be a potential disaster. Let's face it, when your pets are living at home and aren't getting along, they can and do choose to separate for as long as necessary until they cool down. In a travel box, together for many hours without a break and with nowhere to go, there really is a dramatically increased possibility of even the closest of pets becoming dangerously angry or frustrated with each other, and therefore aggressive with each other, without either of them having the sense to control themselves. So whether you travel using our services or not, please do consider this carefully if you initially feel inclined to have them share.

Now, just to add a bit of force to this point of view, and again referring back to IATA (International Air Transport Association, [www.iata.org](http://www.iata.org)):

*"A maximum of two adult animals of comparable size up to 14kg each, that are used to cohabitation, may be shipped in the same container. Animals over that weight must travel individually."*

...and...

*"Animals up to six months old from the same litter, up to a maximum quantity of three, may be shipped in the same container/compartment."*

Notice that IATA actually allow for some restricted sharing for adults ~ we however still recommend against this, and indeed the airline you're travelling with may have their own restrictions as well.

Having said all this, we *do* have one variation on the theme for you to consider. How about a double-sized travel box with a strong, mesh-windowed partition to create two compartments? If your pets are relatively small and you really feel strongly that travelling together will help them feel safe, then it's certainly possible to build a specially-made wooden travel box in this way so that they can be together... without actually being together.

### how fair is the fare ?

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#### Cargo

The airlines base the airfare for your pet's air waybill on the volumetric weight (i.e. dimensions) of your pet's travel box and the kilorate for the destination airport. The final cost of the air waybill will almost always be higher using the volumetric weight versus the *actual* weight. So, you really don't have to worry about the weight of the travel box you purchase, but instead should focus very much on making sure the box is the perfect size ~ i.e. large enough to be safe and comfortable for your pet during the hours of travel he/she will have to do, but not larger than necessary so that costs are kept to a minimum (and so your pet doesn't have too much space, which can also be unsafe).



### **Accompanied Baggage**

Quite the reverse to cargo, the majority of airlines usually base the airfare on the total weight of your pet's travel box with him/her inside, so you might want to put your dog or cat on a weight-loss programme <smile> and in a lighter travel box such as a Luxx-Aire, VariKennel or SkyKennel if your pet will be travelling as accompanied baggage. (But remember... when importing your pet *into* the United Arab Emirates, law requires that they come in as cargo, not accompanied baggage!)

### **the end**

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And that's it. If you'd like any more information or advice, please just give us a call or drop us an email.