



# Traveling with McScottie

By Michael Krolewski©

When booking the flight, plan for the dog(s) to be part of your travel plans. You can reserve space on the flight for your dog. The number of animals on a flight varies with each airline and the size of the plane. Space is often limited, so book space for your pet when you book your flight. You will need to educate your travel agent that you need one hour between connecting flight.

Temperature is also important in choosing your flight. In hot summer months, many airlines will not ship dogs. If you do fly your dog, pick an overnight flight or leave very early in the morning. In the winter, you should try for southern airports; In the summer, you should go for northern airports. Check with the airline for any problems. Avoid Chicago during the coldest months. Even with the best planning, it is possible that the airlines will reject your transporting of a dog due to weather conditions/ temperature. If you think it is an issue, call to confirm prior to going to airport.

With online search engines, you can find the best and shortest flight. If the dog is to be transfer, the airline usually needs a two hour layover. Avoid commuter flights. The planes are usually smaller and most do not accept dogs as excess baggage and/or in the cabin

## **Foreign Travel:**

Each country has different rules and regulations concerning bringing animals into their country. You need to familiarize yourself with these in advance. Six month quarantine periods exist in some country. In Japan, New Zealand and Australia, the quarantine period can be shortened if you plan carefully. These countries have only a one month quarantine --provided the dog's rabies titer is verifiable six months in advance and the dog is micro-chipped. Most European, South American and Pacific Rim counties do not have waiting periods. In all cases, you will need a certified international health certificate from the State Veterinarian's Office. Check with the state veterinarian if in doubt

Bringing a dog back from overseas -- even countries with quarantines -- is not a problem if you have proper health documentation. We have brought dogs back from England with no wait. In fact, the custom agents handled us separately because of the dog. It does take a little longer as they must call in an Agriculture inspector to examine your animal. We ask the ticketing agent to e-mail agents at the arriving

city's that an agriculture inspector is needed. Going to Canada and back requires rabies certificate to return to US.

## **Getting ready to travel**

If possible, get the dog used to traveling (and sleeping ) in a crate. Take short trips in the car. Rather than going to a fear-arousing place such as the veterinarian, you should try to take trips that end up at a fun place. As far as no prior training, we have had dogs shipped the first time from England to the West coast non-stop with little or no side effects. We have had 4-6 month puppies travel their first time on a coast to coast flight, again with no ill effects.

There are several pre travel steps that need to be taken. For interstate travel, you need a health certificate for the dog. Several states have had rabies breakouts and are also demanding that you bring a rabies certificate (not just a report on the health certificate). Your veterinarian provides them and does a health check. A health certificate, typically, is good for a two week period from date of issue, so plan accordingly. It is best not to feed your dog for the eight hours preceding air travel. For evening flights, we do not feed the dog the day of the trip. For the early morning or afternoon flights, the evening before feeding is as usual.

Because of a possible reaction to medications, we never have sedated a dog for travel. Scotties, in particular, have strong reactions to tranquilizers such as acepromazine (the typical drug given for travel). We prefer evening (red-eye) flights as the dog will naturally be less active and be more likely to rest. It also is cooler at evening. This is really important in the summer time. If you think your dog will be too excited, try tiring the animal out with play prior to leaving. It will also help calm your nerves.

If you determine that the dog must be sedated, work with your vet to come up with the weakest drug that gets the job done. Do try out the drugs prior to the trip. Benadryl is a possible substitution to sedatives that is safe for most dogs. Not only does it control itching but it has a calming effect. Do walk and water the dog just prior to flight at home or at the airport if the commute is long. Walking at the airport is often difficult as there is no appropriate space or grass adjacent to the parking/gate areas. We prefer to scout out a spot with grass ahead of time for exercising our Scotties.

## **Going to the Airport.**

You are required to have a crate that is sturdy and big enough for the animal to stand up and turn around in. Don't ship in collapsible wire crates. Wooden, plastic or solid metal crates are best. Metal crates, however, should be avoided in hot, humid weather. However, you also do not want to ship your pet in too big of a crate. When there is air turbulence, your Scottie will have more space in which to bounce around. You are required to have absorbent material in the crate. A wire grate is useful in case the animal has an accident (urination, throw up).

Regarding size, we have shipped:

- Two 10 lb puppies fit into a 200 crate

- A Scottish terrier (20 LB dog) fits in a 200 crate

For interstate travel, a health certificate from veterinarian is required., You must also attach two water dishes inside the crate. We like to freeze water in the dishes. In flight, the dog will be able to take a refreshing drink. We place a floor crate and/ or absorbent bedding in the crate. Put a small article of your clothing inside with your pet. A tee shirt that you wore the day before is perfect. It keeps your scent with your pet and reassures them that something familiar is present.

On the other hand, you should not put toys in the crate. When the plane hits turbulence, the toys will fly around the inside of the carrier. As a rule of thumb, don't put anything in the carrier you wouldn't drop on your pet's head from a height of 2 feet. For the same reason, don't put your pet in an overly large carrier. In a car, more room for McScottie is more humane. In a plane, it means that much farther for McScottie to accelerate during turbulence. The smallest comfortable carrier is best.

We also personalize the crate and provide written instructions. We usually tape a note on the crate, indicating that it is not to be opened for ANY reason. We also use locking plastic ties to ensure that all tie-down grommets or locking bolts do not accidentally pop open. Shipping accidents are more likely to occur when dogs are removed from crates or a crate is not put together correctly.

We prominently post the name of the dog on the front of the crate. By personalizes our dog, McScottie is more than just another piece of luggage. That's McScottie in that crate. We take two copies of the health certificate with us. One copy remains with us. The other copy can be turned into the agent or taped to the crate, if necessary.

Plan to arrive 2 hours prior to flight to ensure the dog gets through luggage. Remember this is extra baggage (generally \$50-100 one way). And tip the porters generously. You cannot walk dogs into the terminals. You may want to want to have a crate dolly to move the crates from the car to the airport. This is also useful for traveling at the other end, going in and out of hotels, etc.

## **Where is McScottie?**

Animals are shipped in the same compartment as other baggage (yes that includes valuables and flowers). It does NOT have the same climate control as the passenger compartment, nor does it have a light during flight. The compartment has two switches: one turns on a light for loading and unloading which is turned out for flight, the other turns on a heater. Note that this is not automatic. The baggage handler must remember to turn on the heater. This heater does not keep the compartment really warm, just habitable.

On narrow bodied planes (727, 737, etc.), the pressurized compartment is forward of the wings. Luggage is loaded fore and aft of the door. A web net is attached from floor to ceiling (all 3 feet) to keep luggage from blocking the door. Any animals are then placed in front of the door and the cages are tied down. The heat is turned on, the light turned out, and the door closed. On wide body planes (747, DC-10, etc.) the heated compartment is aft of the wings. Luggage is carried inside containers. Animals, delicats, and such are loaded in the farthest aft compartment, which is

subdivided by web netting. Again, heat is optional so a loose blanket is a protective addition to the crate.

## Boarding the plane

You should get verification if the dog is on board. Ask the flight attendants. Some flight attendants do this reluctantly. In that case, you must be persistent. Stand up and refuse to sit down until they get you the information. They can't fly until you are seated so they eventually will comply. They should call down to the baggage handlers for confirmation of the dog being loaded. Remember more than your dog could be on the flight. Describe the dog (small, white ) to get better confirmation. Do this after each plane transfer... Some airlines (Northwest) have "doggie" tickets. The attendant brings a ticket to your seat at each boarding point. Do not sit down until you have received confirmation that YOUR dog is on board. Make a stink if the steward does not have the captain check below for YOUR dog.

## McScottie on board

An alternative to the crate in the cargo is a carry-one container. To take a dog as excess baggage or as a carry-on, the airlines charge, on average, \$100. The idea is to get a crate or soft sherpa bag that can fit under the seat. For a full grown Scottish Terrier you will need a large sherpa bag. This works for toys or puppies. The major advantage is the animal is always near you. The disadvantage is carrying an active animal or a noisy animal. On long flights, the dog may be better off in a crate than crammed in a small bag under the seat in front of you. Remember, you are not allowed to take the dog out of the sherpa bag at any time during the flight.



Once while using the bag, the puppy decided to go for a walk. Basically, he was able to step on the sides of the bag and walk along like inside a big ball. It was quite comical especially to passerby's who saw a luggage bag that was self-propelled.

[Sherpa bags](#) are available at good pet stores; in the pet catalogs; and in those airline magazines that are in the plane seats. Look for ones with the maximum amount of venting and flaps to cover the vents as needed. Some carriers have storage inside the cabin for animals. This seems to be common for international/ overseas flights (e.g., British airlines). A friend traveling overseas flew with the dog crate in the cabin. It was not directly accessible but could be done for emergencies while the plane was in-route.

## Exiting the plane

The dog is generally available in the oversized baggage area or at the service area for luggage claim. Since the dog is the first thing off the plane, it may arrive quickly. Be prepared to walk the dog immediately, especially on the long flights.

It is generally easier to get the rental car and then get the dog. And reverse the process when returning the car. The dog is usually at a claim area -- and secure.

One can ride the rental buses with the dog if you desire. But it may be harder. Also, big dogs (a Lab is big) and their big crates do not fit into all cars. You may need a small wagon or a van to transport everything easily. Generally, rental agency does not want the dog to sit in the seats while traveling. In the crate is fine. Most cabs will not take dogs, in crates or not. Generally you would need a limo service. Identify that you are traveling with an animal in a crate to ensure the correct size vehicle.

## **Shipping McScottie via air freight**

Basically, the same things that apply to taking the dog with you, apply when shipping the dog via air cargo. The major difference is that reservations are made at the air cargo office and can be done closer to ship time. The cost of shipping is often greater and usually depends upon the size and weight of the dog and crate. We have paid as much as \$225 to ship a Scottish Terrier. Often we make reservations the day before we ship. The drop off point varies. In most major airports, air cargo is done at a different terminal/building complex. Be sure to get specific directions. Drop off is at least two hours prior to flight, as is for all cargo. Cost varies with distance, weight and to some extent destination. Sometime cargo flights are delayed. Be sure to leave a local number in case. Some flights are once a day. When this occurs, it would be advisable to retrieve the dog and bring it back the following day. Our preference are the specialty counter to counter modes of transporting dogs. There are two reasons for this. The Scottie is hand carried to the plane and connecting flights. More important, ground time is less.

## **At the other end...**

The shipping information should have the name and phone number of the person to pick up the animal. Some cargo is sent to cargo and some to the regular baggage area. Counter to counter service is generally done to the baggage area (and is usually, but not always, more expensive but it also faster and more secure). Confirm prior to shipping and notify the person at the other end. To track the flight of your dog, you and the receiver will need to know the air bill number. Do not leave the counter without that number. Some cargo centers close at night. An animal arriving after the close time is held until morning. Confirm if this is the case and plan around it. This is especially important when shipping west to east. Generally, try to minimize time that the animal is in transit, including drop off, travel time and holding at the other end. Generally the dog is available at air cargo about 30 - 60 minutes after the flight lands.

If a flight stops part way (mechanical, weather), the airlines should place the dog with a kennel or vet until the next flight if the delay is more than 12 hours. If this happens, you should be able to get the name and number of the kennel to confirm the condition of the dog. Call them personally. Remember, they are carrying for YOUR dog, not the airline's dog.