



Appeal to the transport industry for a safe pet-friendly passage for Ukrainians fleeing the war

An unprecedented number of Ukrainians fled their homes to seek safety abroad from the Russian invasion. Millions of refugees crossed the Ukrainian border to neighboring countries to move on to other destinations using buses, trains and planes as well as their cars, turning this into the fastest developing refugee crisis since WWII, according to the United Nations. Many refugees bring their companion animals along on their flight to safety. Leaving their pets behind is an impossible decision. We urge transport companies to provide a safe pet-friendly passage for Ukrainians fleeing the war.

In times of military conflicts, disasters and other calamities, animals are among the greatest sources of comfort for those who have lost their home and family. This is true especially for children, who cope with the distress much easier when with their pet. We see this also now, when many Ukrainians, who flee their country with nothing but just a bag full of the bare necessities, are not leaving their cats, dogs and other companion animals behind.

We receive worrying reports from officials and organizations on the ground in Poland and Romania where Humane Society International has operations. They see that it is increasingly difficult for refugees who arrive from Ukraine with their pets, to move on together further into the EU by plane or bus, due to pet transport obstacles and restrictions. Strict policies force refugees to make the seemingly impossible decision to leave their cat or dog behind at local shelters, charities or with relatives, while some even release their beloved pet near the airport or bus station. This not only adds to the trauma the refugees and their animals are going through, but also deepens the emerging animal welfare crisis. Estimates show that more than 30,000 pets have been taken out of Ukraine in the first three weeks after the start of the war.

The European Commission, in recognition that people fleeing the conflict care deeply about their companion animals as beloved members of their family and want to keep them safe, advised member states to ease the standard requirements for pet entry into the EU listed in Regulation (EU) 576/2013. Many national authorities listened to this recommendation. We appeal to the transport industry to follow the example and create a safe pet-friendly passageway for Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war. We urge the land travel sector—especially coach, bus, minivan and private transfer companies, but also those involved in air travel—to remove all obstacles, within the scope of their power and when safe to do so, for pets to board in the cabin or in the hold of busses and airplanes. While HSI recognizes that live animal transport is a complex, multifaceted process involving a multitude of stakeholders ranging from shippers to freight forwarders to airline staff, such tragedy requires a creative strategy to keep people and pets together.

OUR APPEAL TO COACH, BUS, MINIVAN AND PRIVATE TRANSFER COMPANIES

- When safe to do so, allow animals to travel.
- Reconsider and amend company policies restricting the transportation of companion animals.
- Reduce the costs or waive the fees for transporting animals.
- Ease the process and requirements to book an animal on the bus.

- Regularly inform and empower bus drivers and ground staff to make safe pet-friendly decisions.
- Provide pet carriers to passengers who do not have one for their animals.
- Provide pet food and water to the animals.
- Whenever feasible and safe to do so, provide timely breaks for a sanitary stop for the dogs.
- Provide free phone support, in multiple languages

OUR APPEAL TO AIRLINE COMPANIES

- Eliminate barriers to the transportation of companion animals, when in compliance with airline regulations and animal welfare standards.
- Reduce the costs or waive the fees for transporting animals.
- Ease the process and requirements to book an animal as baggage on the plane.
- Increase the number of pets accepted on individual flights, as carry-on, checked baggage, or both when safe to do.
- Regularly inform and empower ground staff to make safe pet-friendly decisions.
- Prioritize cargo space to allow for the transport of companion animals.
- Provide appropriate transport containers (pet carriers) to passengers at the airport who fail to bring one.
- Provide free phone support, in multiple languages
- If the transport of pets is not possible on a specific airline or plane, airlines should clearly state it on their websites.
- If the transport of pets is not possible on a specific airline or plane, airlines should strive to form strategic partnerships with air and ground transport companies to reunify pets with their owners at their final destinations.

OUR APPEAL TO FREIGHT FORWARDERS, CARGO HANDLERS, SHIPPERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FREIGHT INDUSTRY

- Eliminate barriers to the transportation of companion animals, when in compliance with airline regulations and animal welfare standards.
- Provide consultation on pet requirements, regulations and restrictions and help pet owners to obtain a pet passport, (rabies) vaccination(s), microchip, and when required, a health card.
- Provide consultation and support for free or at a reduced cost.
- Reduce the costs or waive the fees for companion animal transport.
- Prioritize cargo space to allow for the transport of companion animals.
- Provide appropriate transport containers (pet carriers) for free or at a reduced cost
- Provide appropriate transport containers (pet carriers) to passengers at the airport who fail to bring one.
- Provide free phone support, in multiple languages