

FLYING HOME WITH YOUR PUPPY

*Making the trip home easier for you
and your new puppy!*



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Table of Contents

Flying Home With Your Puppy!..... 4

Reservations..... 4

Documentation..... 5

Gather Your Gear Ahead of Time..... 5

Sherpa bags..... 6

Condition Your Puppy to the Sherpa 7

Using Potty Packs..... 9

What to expect on the flight..... 9

When to get on the road for the airport..... 11

Setting the car or taxi up for success!..... 12

Locating the Sherpa..... 12

Motion..... 12

Temperature of the vehicle..... 13

Meals..... 13

Potting the puppy..... 14

Preparing the Sherpa for the trip..... 15



As breeders, we love the feelings of sending a litter of beautiful pups off to their new homes. Those days are filled with excitement and joy—for us and the families who have been anxiously awaiting their new puppy. However, we also have a bit of worry about how the pup will handle the transition to its new home, starting with the trip home since the trip can be stressful for all concerned, especially the puppy.

Having sent home hundreds of puppies over the last 35 years we've learned many things that can help make those trips easier, whether new owners are driving to the next town or flying across the continent. We are delighted to share what we have learned with you in this ebook so you can make your puppies' transitions to their new homes a good experience for everyone.



Heading home

We have broken this ebook down into three parts:

- Preparing Puppies for the Trip Home—things breeders can do before sending pups home
- Driving Home with Your Puppy—things puppy owners can do to make that drive go smoothly
- Flying Home with Your Puppy—things puppy owners can do to ensure an uneventful flight home

We've also created resource lists in each section to help you gather the items you will need.

Flying Home With Your Puppy!

The Scouts' motto, "Be Prepared" holds true for being successful with most things in life. Knowing what to expect and how to handle what happens as you travel home with your puppy will help make your pup's first trip with you the best experience possible.

Thinking about flying a puppy as carry-on luggage can be stressful but with proper preparation, both you and your puppy can have a great trip. Your puppy will get wonderful socialization in the airport and during the flight and you will know your pup has been well taken care of onboard.

We have been sending pups home in airplane cabins for nearly two decades so have a lot of experience. We have gathered our own lessons learned as well as those of our puppy buyers in this handout. Our goal is to help make your trip home with your new puppy as easy as possible for both of you. Knowing what to bring, how to prepare in advance and what to do while traveling will go a long way in making the trip a good one.



Reservations

Call the airline as soon as possible to make a reservation for you and your puppy. It is best to call the airline for this reservation so you can ensure they know about your puppy and you can get the most up-to-date information on the airlines requirements for documents, travel crates, etc. Most airlines limit the number of animals allowed on each flight to be sure to book your flight early if you have a small window of travel available.



Book your flight early!

Documentation

You will need specific documentation, a health certificate and perhaps a bill of sale, for your flight with your puppy. Coordinate with your breeder to be sure you have everything you need for the flight.

- Be sure you have a health certificate from your breeder's veterinarian establishing that your puppy is healthy and listing the vaccinations your puppy has received. Typically a certificate issued within 10 days of travel is acceptable for airline travel but you should check with your airline to confirm this.
- Keep the certificate in an easily-accessible place—do not pack it with your luggage because you will need to produce it at the airport.
- If you are importing your puppy to another country or crossing an international border, check with each government's agency and your breeder to be sure you have the appropriate documents. (And be sure your passport is up to date if you are traveling across a border.) You also may need to show a bill of sale and pay duty, depending upon the country.



Official documents

Gather Your Gear Ahead of Time

Since you are flying with your pup, you need more gear than you would if you were driving.

- **Sherpa pet carrier.** Get a Sherpa with the most ventilation and a two-sided bottom with both vinyl and fleece.
- **Collar and leash,** be sure the collar fits the puppy snugly so you can't lose your puppy on the trip home
- **Potty Packs** consisting of the following in a one-gallon Ziploc bag:
 - One **Wee wee pad**
 - Three paper towels, folded individually

- A snack-sized Ziploc bag of pellets, shavings or whatever the breeder used as potty litter for the puppies
- **Small, battery-powered fan**
- **Treats**, take a variety of healthy, tasty treats that do not need refrigeration
- **Water container.** A small, sealable container for water, such as a Tupperware or Ziploc container. Remember, buy your bottle of water **AFTER** you get through Security so it won't be confiscated on the way through.
- **Chews.** Get a few puppy-sized chewies, such as **stuffed Kongs, bully straps, pig's ears** and **marrow bones**. If you are traveling internationally, be sure you know the importation rules for bringing chews into the country.
- **Comforting smells.** A soft toy and/or towel that has the scent of your puppy's mom and littermates on it.
- **Cooling bags.** Four to six quart-sized Ziploc bags that you can have the flight attendant fill with ice, then double bag them and put them in the Sherpa to keep the puppy cool.
- **Benadryl tablets**, split into the appropriate size for your puppy. Benadryl makes most puppies drowsy so tends to make the flight go more smoothly. Give the first dose 30 minutes before you take off and then every 6-8 hours thereafter. We give our 10-12 pound puppies ½ Benadryl every 6 hours. Check with your veterinarian to find out what the correct dose would be for your puppy.
- **Meals.** If you are traveling for more than three hours, have prepared meals in individual containers so you can easily feed your puppy on the trip. If you are feeding raw, package the food in throw-away containers so you don't have to deal with messy food bowls.
- **Baggies for potty cleanup** at or on the way to the airport

Sherpa bags

Puppies that fly as carry-on baggage must be contained in small crates, typically Sherpa bags. Sherpas are small soft-sided crates designed to fit under the seat on a plane. There are other brands of soft-sided crates that can be used, but before buying one make sure it complies with airline regulations for carry-on luggage.

It is also best to purchase a simple, light-weight luggage cart that you can strap the Sherpa to for long hauls through the airport.

If you are using your own **Sherpa bag**, ask your breeder if you can send it to her ahead of time so she can get your new puppy accustomed to it. Even if she does not, you can quickly condition your pup to the Sherpa if you arrive at the breeder's a day ahead of time.

Condition Your Puppy to the Sherpa

Start by making the Sherpa smell familiar. Put it in the puppy pen for a few hours but monitor the puppies to ensure they do not damage it. You want it to smell like your pup's mom, litter-mates and home.

Next, condition your puppy to the Sherpa. This is a quick process that can be done in a few sessions. Spend just a few minutes on each step and progress as the puppy is comfortable. Talk quietly to the puppy and allow her to see you. Pet her through the unzipped top or through the mesh sides of the Sherpa.

- **Step One**

- Place the Sherpa on the floor or a table so it will not move when you place the puppy inside.
- Open all of the flaps—top and ends, if the Sherpa has both.
- Toss a handful of REALLY GOOD treats inside the bag.
- Open the top flap as wide as it will go and place the puppy in the bag leaving the flap open.
- Allow her to eat the treats, showing them to her if necessary.
- Toss in additional treats while she is in the bag.
- Continue to toss in treats for 2-3 minutes.
- Take her out of the bag. Don't give her any treats after she has been removed from the bag.

- **Step Two**

- Repeat the step above continuing to treat her for 4-6 minutes before taking her out of the bag.
- While she is eating, stroke her across her back.

- **Step Three**

- Repeat Step Two but zip the bag closed about half way continuing to toss treats into the bag for 1-3 minutes before taking her out of the bag.

- **Step Four**

- Repeat Step Three, but now zip the Sherpa bag until it is completely closed and allow the puppy to eat the treats.
- While she is eating, unzip the bag just enough to drop in additional treats. Be sure not to let her escape from the bag.
- Continue to add treats zipping and unzipping the bag for 1-3 minutes.
- Unzip the bag and take her out. Don't give her any treats after she has been removed from the bag.



Remember to only give treats while she is in the travel bag

- **Step Five**

- Repeat the Step Four, dropping in lots of amazing treats and zip the bag completely closed.
- Pick up the bag being sure to hold it horizontally so she can keep her balance.
- Slowly walk around the room with the bag.
- Stop walking and set the bag down so you can unzip the bag just enough to drop in additional treats. Again, be sure not to let her escape from the bag. Remember while she is in the bag you can quietly reassure her.
- Walk around the room for 5-10 minutes stopping to reward her with treats and praise. If the puppy is relaxed you can unzip the top to pet her and scratch her head.
- Take her out when she is calm and relaxed. If she is upset, unzip the top and put your hand in to pet and stroke her. Wait for her to calm down before taking her out.
- Remember not to reward the puppy with treats after she has been removed from the bag.

Using Potty Packs

Take the stress out of pottyng your puppy in the airport and onboard the plane by having potty packs ready. Your breeder may supply you with potty packs but if she doesn't, make some yourself. How many you need depends upon the length of your flight(s): for flights less than six hours, take two packs. For those over six hours, take three to four.

To use a potty pack, put the wee-wee pad on the ground in a bathroom stall and sprinkle the litter on it. Keep the puppy on leash while encouraging her to potty on the pad. Wait patiently since puppies often are distracted when you first put them down in a new place.

Once the puppy potties, fold up the used wee-wee pad and put it in the Ziploc bag. Use the paper towels to clean up any mess. Toss them in the bag, seal it and dispose of everything in the bathroom trash container.

What to expect on the flight

What should you expect when you fly with a puppy in the cabin? Much of your trip will be similar to any other airline flight. After arriving at the airport but before going inside, try to potty your puppy. Then check in at the normal airline counter before making your way through security. At the counter, you may need to show your pup's health certificate to the airline personnel.

At security, you will have to remove your puppy so the Sherpa can be x-rayed. Then you will go to and wait at the gate until your flight is called. While moving through the airport, your pup should be in the Sherpa bag but once at the gate, you can take her out for some playtime and relaxation. Keep an eye on her in case she needs to potty. If she does, use your potty packs (see above) to keep the airport clean. It's usually best to go to the restroom to get her to potty.



Take her to the restroom if you think she needs to potty

We recommend giving puppies a dose of normal, human Benadryl about 30 minutes before boarding the plane. Benadryl makes most puppies very sleepy so will help the pup nap throughout the flight. Check with your vet regarding the correct dosage for your puppy.

Once onboard, your puppy will need to be in a closed Sherpa bag, at least during take-off and landing. Occasionally, kind flight attendants will let you hold her on your lap during the rest of the flight but that is rare. However, you should be able open the top of the Sherpa bag so you can pet, reassure and take care of your pup.

The biggest challenge for puppies on airplanes is heat. Hot puppies are miserable and often very loud so do what you can to keep your puppy cool. To safely cool your puppy, put her leash on so she doesn't get loose and open the top of the Sherpa bag. Then, direct the overhead air vent into it.

Ask the flight attendants to fill some double-bagged, Ziploc bags with ice and place them in or around the Sherpa. If your puppy has a heavy coat, direct a small, battery-powered fan into the Sherpa.

Keep your puppy occupied during the flight with chewies, meals and water. If she starts to get restless, she may need to potty so grab a potty pack and head to the restroom. Put the wee-wee pad on the floor and sprinkle the litter on it. Encourage her to potty on the pad. Wait patiently since puppies often are distracted when you first put them down in a new place.

Once she potties, fold up the used wee-wee pad and put it in the Ziploc bag. Use the paper towels to clean up any mess. Toss them in the bag, seal it and dispose of everything in the trash container.

That's about it except expect to be the most popular person in the airport with your new pup. Passengers love to meet puppies while they wait for their planes. Flying is a great experience for your pup so enjoy the trip!



Bring your travel pack to let her potty

When to get on the road for the airport

I learned a lot from my sister-in-law as I watched her do an amazing job raising five children. What struck a chord for me was you do things when the timing is right for the kids, not for you. The same is true for puppies, so be ready to leave when the time is right for the puppy!

Ideally you want to get on the road when:

- The puppy has had lots of exercise, running and playing with her littermates and is ready to crash! Remember tired puppies make the best travel companions!
- The puppy has gone to the bathroom recently. Don't assume because you have been outside sitting in the grass enjoying the litter and chatting with the breeder that your puppy has gone to the bathroom recently. Keep an eye on her and be aware of the last time she pottied.
- The puppy has not eaten a meal in the last hour or two to avoid any carsickness.
- The car or taxi is completely packed—all you have to do is put the puppy in the car and drive away! If the puppy is settled and quiet, avoid long goodbyes and get moving right away!



Get on the road when the puppy is tired

It is not always possible to time the above list perfectly, but keeping these things in mind you and your breeder can do your best to get off at the right time.

Setting the car or taxi up for success!

Since you are likely driving to the airport, you'll also need to know how to help your puppy have a good car experience. You can help your puppy relax and fall asleep in the car by creating a comfortable environment. If you are traveling with someone else, it is all right to have your passenger hold the puppy on his or her lap. However some puppies don't like to be restrained for long periods of time so would be happier in the Sherpa even for a short trip. Best to be prepared for both and then you can choose which will work best.

Locating the Sherpa

If you are traveling alone, secure the Sherpa on the front passenger's seat with a seatbelt. If you are traveling with someone, they can hold the Sherpa on their laps or sit in the back seat with the puppy in the Sherpa.

CAUTION: A common error people make is putting the puppy's Sherpa in the back of the car. Since this is the first time your puppy is by herself in the car, the puppy is likely to feel abandoned and alone all the way in the back. The puppy will start howling, barking and crying.

This crying is not necessarily about being in the Sherpa but instead is the puppy doing the "lost puppy" cry so that her mom or littermate can find her. This is very stressful for the puppy and can contribute to car sickness and fear of cars. In addition, it can be pretty loud. To avoid this stress on both you and your puppy be sure the puppy is close to you when you are traveling home.

Motion

Many puppies have a difficult time settling into a Sherpa in the car as the world whizzes by them! Your pup will likely settle more easily if you place the Sherpa low in the car so she cannot see things moving by her.

Temperature of the vehicle

When puppies are hot you will know it because they cry, move around and cannot get comfortable. And puppies are often hot when the temperature is comfortable for us. Even if you are traveling in the dead of winter, be prepared to keep the car cool. Bring something warm to wear for each non-doggie passenger in the car and keep the temperature in the car cooler than you would probably like in order to allow your pup to be comfortable. If your puppy is crying during the trip, and you know she does not have to potty, she likely is hot.

Meals

If you are traveling for more than three hours, prepare individual meals in easy-to-use, disposable containers so you can feed your puppy on the trip. If you feed raw, package the food in throw-away containers so you don't have to deal with messy food bowls.

Keep the bag with the pup's things easily accessible as you pack the car. It's amazing how often the bag you need most winds up at the bottom of the pile if you don't plan your packing in advance.



Be sure to dress warmly so you can keep the puppy comfortable



Raw food ready to travel and water dish

Potting the puppy

Your puppy should be able to go about two hours between potty breaks, if she pottied just before you left. If you are traveling longer than that on your way to the airport we've put together a few tips to help you and your pup have success with safely pottying your pup while traveling:

- When your puppy wakes up she will need most likely need to potty very quickly so look for a rest area after she's been asleep for 45-60 minutes.
- If your puppy is screaming in the car and you are not sure if she needs to go, believe her! She likely has to potty.
- Try to find a place away from traffic to set her down. Be sure she is on leash!
- If you must stop on the side of the road be SURE your puppy cannot slip out of her collar no matter how hard she pulls on it! This is good advice at any time but is critical when your puppy is in a brand new place with people she barely knows!
- Do your best to get off the highway at either an exit or rest stop. If you have to go to a rest stop DO NOT take her to the "dog walk" areas. She has not been fully vaccinated and must be kept away from areas where unknown dogs go to the bathroom. Instead find an out-of-the way grassy area to set your puppy down. Avoid any dog feces you see no matter where you are walking her.
- The safest place to potty your puppy is at an office or industrial park. Find some grass in an area that would not likely have had other dogs around and set her down on leash.
- Once she has gone, praise her and give her some treats.
- Be sure to clean up after your puppy!



Look for a place that you would not typically find other dogs to potty your puppy

Preparing the Sherpa for the trip

Getting the Sherpa ready for the trip to the airport is important! Add each of the following items to the Sherpa **BEFORE** putting the puppy in:

- Be sure the pad is in the Sherpa so the puppy won't slide around.
- A small stuffed toy or towel that has the scent of familiar dogs/puppies on it. Before leaving the breeder's, let the puppies play with the toy and rub it on the puppy's mother to pick up her scent.
- One or two things for the pup to chew on.
 - Pigs' ears or bully straps are a good size and weight
 - The chewy should be easy for your puppy to chew, so now is not the time for a giant smoked knuckle bone. You want the puppy to be able to pick up the chewy and move to the other side of the Sherpa with it.
- Toss in a handful of good treats that she can find on her own before you put her in the crate.
- Do not put water in the Sherpa. During this trip you need to monitor how much water your puppy is drinking so you won't have to stop too frequently. Be sure she has had access to water before you leave and then offer her some water every few hours, without letting her drink too much water at one time.



