

Paws, Prepare, Move: A Complete Checklist for Moving with Pets

4–6 weeks before

- Book a vet visit for a wellness check, vaccination updates, and travel certificates if required for flights or cross-border moves.
- Request copies of medical records, prescriptions, and a recent photo of your pet for identification.
- Update microchip registration and order a new ID tag with your mobile number and future city or ZIP code.
- Research travel options: car, airline pet policies, pet-friendly hotels, or professional pet transport services.
- Measure for a well-ventilated, carrier-approved crate; begin crate training with treats and short calm sessions.
- Create a moving plan for each pet type (dog, cat, small mammal, bird, reptile, fish) noting temperature needs and handling.

2–3 weeks before

- Build a pet “Go Bag” you’ll keep with you: 3–7 days of food, water, bowls, leash/harness, waste bags, litter and tray, scoop, bedding, blanket, favorite toys, meds, first-aid kit, cleaning wipes, towels, and enzyme cleaner.
- Refill prescriptions and preventive meds (flea, tick, heartworm) and set reminders for doses on the road.
- Pet-proof the new home plan: identify a quiet “landing room” for first days, confirm window screens, remove hazards, and prepare a safe zone for litter or potty breaks.
- Introduce moving supplies slowly so boxes and tape smells feel normal, not alarming.

1 week before

- Confirm travel bookings, crate dimensions, and any airline or border health document requirements.
- Freeze a small supply of familiar water if your pet is sensitive to changes; pack a collapsible bowl.
- Prepare comfort items with familiar scents (used blanket or T-shirt) to reduce anxiety.

- Arrange a sitter or closed-door room for loading day so pets are secure and can't slip out.
- Label and set aside the pet Go Bag so it does not go on the moving truck.

Moving day

- Exercise and feed lightly several hours before movers arrive to reduce nerves and motion discomfort.
- Secure pets in a quiet room with door sign "Pets Inside – Do Not Open," or have them off-site with a sitter.
- Use a well-fitted harness and leash for transfers; transport pets in secured carriers only.
- Keep meds, water, paper towels, waste bags, and wipes accessible for en-route stops and accidents.
- For long drives, schedule regular rest breaks; never leave pets in a parked car unattended.

Travel tips by pet type

- Dogs: Car harness or secured crate, window shade, regular breaks, and a familiar blanket for calm.
- Cats: Covered carrier for darkness and quiet, spare litter tray, and a towel over the carrier to limit visual stress.
- Small mammals: Stable temperature, chew safe items, and secure carriers away from drafts.
- Birds: Perch-secured travel cage, light cover to reduce stimuli, steady temperature, and gentle handling.
- Reptiles: Maintain warmth with heat packs as needed, ventilated containers, and avoid direct sun exposure.
- Fish: For short moves, use sealed fish bags in insulated containers; for longer moves, rehome temporarily or consult a specialty shipper.

On arrival

- Unpack pet essentials first and set up the landing room with food, water, bed, toys, and litter/potty area.
- Re-establish routine immediately: feeding times, walks, play, and quiet time in the same order as before.

- Supervise exploration room-by-room; block escape paths and check fences and gates before outdoor time.
- Schedule a new local vet, transfer records, and note the nearest emergency clinic.
- Monitor appetite, litter/potty habits, and behavior; allow extra patience as stress resolves.

Special considerations

- Temperature safety: Plan climate control for animals sensitive to heat/cold during transit and stops.
- Regulations: Check breed, species, or vaccination rules for condos, HOAs, rentals, airlines, and regions.
- Cleaning and odors: Pack enzyme cleaner and spare bedding to manage accidents without stress.

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