

PCS With Pets: Pre-Move Checklist

As Soon as You Have Orders

- Schedule a vet appointment for a health certificate (Certificate of Veterinary Inspection)

Book within 10 days of your departure date. Vets fill up fast in spring and summer, so get on the calendar now.

- Confirm all vaccinations are current (rabies especially)

- Print physical copies of vaccination records

- Verify microchip registration is up to date with a current phone number and email

- Research pet import requirements if PCSing to Hawaii, OCONUS, or overseas

Hawaii and many countries have timelines that start months before your move date.

- Book pet-friendly lodging along your route

Don't wait on this. Pet-friendly rooms go quickly during PCS season.

- Check on-base lodging availability at your gaining installation

Limited pet-friendly rooms available at most installations. Book as soon as dates are confirmed.

- Check TLE options at gaining installation for pets

Not all TLE facilities allow pets. Confirm early and budget for pet fees separately.

If You're Flying With Pets

- Check airline's in-cabin pet policy (weight limit, carrier dimensions)

- Confirm cargo restrictions for your breed

Brachycephalic breeds (bulldogs, pugs, Persians, etc.) are often restricted from cargo.

- Check for summer heat embargoes — many airlines limit pet cargo June through August

- Book pet reservation directly with the airline (separate from your ticket)

- Get USDA-accredited vet to sign health certificate if flying internationally

Paperwork

- Health certificate issued within 10 days of departure date

- Physical copies of all vaccination records
- Microchip documentation
- Vet contact information saved and accessible
- USDA APHIS import paperwork (OCONUS only)
- Country-specific health certificate (OCONUS only)
- Rabies titer test results if required by destination country
- Breed documentation if applicable

Packing for Your Pets

- Carrier or crate (airline-approved if flying)
- Familiar blanket or worn clothing item for carriers
- Enough food for the full trip plus a few extra days
- Portable water bowl and bottled water
- Any medications or supplements
- Waste bags, litter, and disposable litter box for cats
- Leash, collar, and ID tags with your cell number
- Recent photo of each pet saved on your phone
- Copy of vet records in your go-bag

Travel Day

- Light meal only before departure (reduces car sickness)
- Exercise dogs before loading up
- Place familiar blanket or worn t-shirt in cat carrier
- Load pets last so they spend minimum time in a parked vehicle
- Plan stops every 2–3 hours for water and bathroom breaks
- Never leave pets in a parked car, even briefly
- Keep cats in carriers while the car is moving

- Confirm pet-friendly hotel reservation before you arrive

At Your Destination

- Find a new vet before you need one
- Update pet microchip registration with new address
- Update ID tags with new contact information
- Secure the space before letting pets roam (check fences, screens, gaps)
- Give pets a quiet room to decompress before introducing the full house
- Establish a routine as quickly as possible — it helps animals settle