

Relocating Your Pet to Canada

A practical guide for importing dogs and cats, including personal and commercial movements, rabies documentation, border inspection, airline planning and provincial considerations.

Personally managed by Julia | Fly Your Tail



Canada is comparatively accessible for personal pets.

Compliant personal dogs and cats usually do not require an import permit or post-arrival quarantine. The exact requirements still depend on species, age, origin, purpose of import and whether the animal is accompanied by its owner.

www.flyyourtail.com

The essentials before you begin

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) sets animal-health import requirements, while the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) verifies declarations and may collect inspection fees at the border. The current Automated Import Reference System (AIRS) should be checked for the exact origin, species, age and end use.

Personal dogs	Dogs under 3 months do not require rabies certification. Older dogs generally need valid rabies documentation or qualifying rabies-free-country certification.
Personal cats	Cats under 3 months are unrestricted for rabies purposes. Cats 3 months or older generally need valid rabies vaccination, qualifying rabies-free-country certification or an accepted RNATT.
Quarantine	Pet dogs are not subject to post-import quarantine when entering Canada. Compliant pet cats are normally released after border inspection.
Import permit	Ordinary personal dogs and cats generally do not require a CFIA import permit, but commercial or unusual cases may.
Inspection	Animals and animal products must be declared. CBSA or CFIA may inspect the pet and documents at the first point of arrival.
Transport	Cabin, accompanied-baggage and manifested-cargo options depend on airline policy, route, pet size, breed and seasonal restrictions.

Purpose of import matters

- A family pet accompanying or following its owner is treated differently from a dog imported for sale, adoption, breeding, resale, research or another commercial purpose.
- Commercial dogs from countries classified by Canada as high risk for dog rabies are prohibited from entry.
- Commercial dogs under 8 months may face additional age, vaccination, health-certificate and inspection requirements.
- Service dogs accompanying their user may qualify for an exemption under CFIA rules.

Do not choose the paperwork by age alone.

Age, origin, ownership, accompaniment and end use must all be assessed before travel is booked.

PERSONAL PETS

Requirements for personal dogs and cats

Dogs

- Dogs younger than 3 months do not require rabies vaccination or rabies-free-country certification for import.
- Dogs 3 months or older from a country not recognised as rabies free generally need a valid rabies vaccination certificate in English or French that clearly identifies the dog.
- A qualifying RNATT of at least 0.5 IU/ml may be accepted as an alternative in specified cases; the laboratory report must identify the dog and travel with it.
- Dogs from recognised rabies-free countries may use an official veterinary certificate confirming the country status and the dog's required residency, or use valid rabies vaccination documentation.
- Personal dogs under 8 months travelling unaccompanied require additional veterinary certification, including examination, age, core vaccinations and fitness to travel, with import within 72 hours of examination.

Cats

- Domestic cats younger than 3 months are not subject to rabies import restrictions.
- Cats 3 months or older generally need a veterinary certificate in English or French showing current rabies vaccination, qualifying rabies-free-country residency, or an RNATT result of at least 0.5 IU/ml.
- If a cat does not meet the rabies requirement, an inspector may issue an order requiring vaccination in Canada at the owner's expense.

Rabies certificate details

- The certificate should clearly identify the animal, including breed, colour, sex, age and other identifying information where available.
- It should state the vaccine product, date administered and validity period, and be signed by a licensed veterinarian.
- Canada does not generally require a universal microchip for ordinary personal dogs and cats, but the airline or origin-country export process may require one. A microchip is strongly recommended for reliable identification.

Step-by-step relocation pathway

1**Classify the movement**

Confirm species, age, origin, owner accompaniment and whether the movement is personal, commercial, rescue, adoption, breeding or transfer of ownership.

2**Check AIRS**

Search the current CFIA Automated Import Reference System using the exact commodity, origin, destination and end use.

3**Prepare veterinary documents**

Complete rabies vaccination or alternative certification, and any additional health certificate required for age or purpose.

4**Choose the travel method**

Compare cabin, accompanied baggage and manifested cargo according to airline limits, kennel size, breed and route.

5**Review the travel kennel**

For hold or cargo travel, calculate the correct size and prepare the kennel to airline and applicable IATA Live Animals Regulations.

6**Plan the Canadian arrival**

Confirm the airport, first point of entry, customs declaration, consignee or owner availability and any broker or cargo-terminal arrangements.

7**Complete airline booking**

Provide the airline or freight agent with the required documents, kennel dimensions, pet weight and handling instructions.

8**Declare the pet at the border**

Present the animal and paperwork to CBSA. Pay any applicable inspection charge and comply with any CFIA direction.

9**Continue to final destination**

After release, collect the pet or arrange onward road or domestic-air transport, subject to local carrier rules.

COMMERCIAL AND SPECIAL CASES

When additional controls apply

Canada may classify a movement as commercial even when only one dog is travelling. The intended end use, ownership transfer and relationship between importer and animal are decisive.

Examples of commercial end use	Possible additional requirements
• Sale or resale • Adoption or rescue placement • Breeding • Research • Show or competition where ownership/end use does not fit personal rules • Unaccompanied movement not connected to an owner relocation	• Import permit or AIRS registration requirement • Official veterinary health certificate • Minimum age and 28-day post-rabies-vaccination waiting period • Core vaccination records for young dogs • Pre-arranged CFIA inspection • Commercial customs and broker procedures

High-risk dog-rabies restriction

- Commercial dogs originating in countries listed by Canada as high risk for dog rabies are prohibited from entry.
- The restriction does not automatically apply to a genuine personal pet relocation, but the personal nature of the movement must be supportable.
- Do not describe a rescue, adoption or sale as a personal pet movement to bypass the prohibition.

Commercial status must be resolved before booking.

A pet may meet the rabies requirements for personal entry but still be inadmissible because its end use is commercial.

Airline, border and destination planning

Air travel

- Airlines set their own cabin, baggage and cargo policies. Canada's import rules do not guarantee airline acceptance.
- Large pets, unaccompanied pets and certain routes may require manifested cargo.
- Brachycephalic breeds may face airline prohibitions or seasonal restrictions.
- The airline makes the final decision on the kennel, aircraft, temperature limits and live-animal acceptance.
- Sedation is generally not recommended for air travel and may lead to refusal.

At the Canadian border

- Declare the live animal and any pet food or animal products.
- Present original rabies and veterinary documents in English or French, or with an acceptable translation where needed.
- CBSA may inspect the animal and collect applicable CFIA inspection fees.
- If documentation is missing, the animal may be delayed, refused, ordered vaccinated or referred for further CFIA action.
- Cargo arrivals may require collection from the airline cargo terminal after customs and animal-health release.

Current CBSA inspection fees

As published by CBSA in 2026, dogs, cats and ferrets imported from countries other than the United States for ordinary purposes are charged CAD 36.95 for the first animal and CAD 6.16 for each additional animal, plus applicable GST/HST. If a vaccination order is issued, higher fees apply.

Fees increase annually and can change. Airline terminal, broker, storage, handling, veterinary and delivery charges are separate.

AFTER FEDERAL ENTRY

Provincial, municipal and onward-travel rules

Federal admission does not end every legal or practical requirement. The final province, municipality, landlord, airline and transport provider may impose additional conditions.

- Check provincial and municipal dog-licensing requirements after arrival.
- Review local breed-specific legislation, housing restrictions and insurance conditions before choosing the destination address.
- Domestic airlines and ground carriers have separate kennel, seasonal and breed rules for onward travel.
- Some remote or northern destinations require an additional flight sector with limited live-animal capacity.
- If connecting through the United States, the pet must also meet current U.S. transit or entry rules; Canadian compliance alone is not sufficient.
- Pet food containing meat or animal products must be declared and may be restricted by origin and formulation.

Common mistakes

Assuming Canada requires no paperwork: Canada may be simpler than some destinations, but rabies and age documentation still matter.

Ignoring end use: Adoption, rescue, sale and breeding can trigger commercial rules.

Using an expired rabies certificate: The animal must be currently vaccinated according to the certificate and vaccine validity.

Not declaring the animal: All animals and animal products must be declared to CBSA.

Relying only on airline advice: Airline acceptance and CFIA admissibility are separate decisions.

Missing U.S. transit rules: A connection through the United States can add CDC and USDA requirements.

Failing to arrange cargo collection: Manifested-cargo pets may need a consignee, broker, terminal payment and local delivery.

FINAL CHECKLIST

Before your pet travels to Canada

- Confirm whether the movement is personal or commercial.
- Check the exact AIRS result for species, age, origin and end use.
- Confirm rabies vaccination, rabies-free-country certification or RNATT eligibility.
- Obtain any additional health certificate required for an unaccompanied young dog or commercial case.
- Verify the airline method: cabin, accompanied baggage or manifested cargo.
- Review the kennel and total pet-plus-kennel weight.
- Confirm Canadian airport, customs and cargo-terminal arrangements.
- Carry original documents in English or French.
- Declare the pet and pet food on arrival.
- Check provincial, municipal and onward-transport rules.

FLY YOUR TAIL

How we support a Canada relocation

Fly Your Tail can manage the complete relocation or only the stages where specialist support is required. Every case is personally coordinated by Julia.

- Personal-versus-commercial movement assessment
- CFIA AIRS and rabies-document review
- Veterinary certificate and export-document coordination
- Cabin, baggage and cargo route assessment
- Travel-kennel sizing and suitability review
- Airline and cargo booking coordination
- Canadian customs, broker and cargo-terminal planning
- U.S. transit assessment where relevant
- Travel-day monitoring and final delivery coordination

Planning a move to Canada?

Send Fly Your Tail your pet's species, breed, age, weight, measurements, origin country, Canadian destination, vaccination history and preferred travel date for an individual assessment.

Official references used for this guide

CFIA - Importing and travelling with pets

<https://inspection.canada.ca/en/importing-food-plants-animals/pets>

CFIA - Import Reference Document for dogs and cats

<https://inspection.canada.ca/en/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/imports/import-policies/general/reference-document>

CFIA - Automated Import Reference System

<https://inspection.canada.ca/en/importing-food-plants-animals/airs>

CFIA - Importing terrestrial animals to Canada

<https://inspection.canada.ca/en/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/imports>

CFIA - Countries at high risk for dog rabies

<https://inspection.canada.ca/en/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/rabies/countries-high-risk-dog>

CBSA - Travelling with animals

<https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/services/fpa-apa/animals-animaux-eng.html>

CBSA - Animal inspection fees

<https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/services/fpa-apa/fees-droits-eng.html>

Important disclaimer

This guide is general information prepared in August 2026. CFIA, CBSA, provincial, municipal and airline requirements can change. The current AIRS result, Canadian legislation and written instructions from the competent authorities take precedence. Fly Your Tail verifies the applicable requirements for each individual case before travel.