

Winged creatures - transporting animals by air

As the old actor's saying has it: 'Never work with children or animals'. But there are many in the freight industry who seem to positively thrive on doing something out of the ordinary.



The ABC of animal transport

General director of AirBridgeCargo Airlines, Sergey Lazarev, says that in the last 3-5 years the carrier has moved an annual volume of live animals totalling 135,000 tonnes, with the major part of from North America. Around 20% are livestock and bloodstock animals.

However, he points out: "Animal transportation cannot be classified as a regular traffic in the same terms as general cargo. Normally animals are shipped under certain circumstances - for breeding or zoo transportation. For the last couple of years, we have seen an increase both in livestock and bloodstock, with ad-hoc deliveries of horses, cows or pigs under special programmes. Of course, there is regular traffic of certain animals during specific events - for example horse races or breeding programmes - but there are a lot of ad-hoc requests."

He adds that ABC has operated several charter flights from Shannon in 2017 and 2018 for bloodstock programmes.

The choice of freighter aircraft used for animal charters depends on a number of factors, depending on the routing and points of origin and destination - if the airports can handle Boeing 747 or Boeing 737 freighters and the volume is suitable, ABC opts for these aircraft. In other cases, it can depend on the species which can influence temperature settings, inflight environment or the need for special cages.

Other factors are the total weight of animal(s) and whether there is the possibility to load

special ULDs for comfortable and seamless transportation of animals in accordance with IATA LAR Container requirements.

Sergey Lazarev adds: "Not all freighter aircraft are equally suitable but it all comes down to the expertise of the carrier's personnel, because with the right knowledge, skills, and experience ABC specialists can organize transportation of any species of animals accepted for air



transportation."

In principle, ABC and its sister carrier VDA will transport animals from any airport that the customer demands. However: "We always check the airport for compliance with the required conditions for transportation of the particular animal. If the airport is not suitable due to lack of facilities or special handling, we search for other options and offer them to the customer. We always make transportation for every animal comfortable not only on board but through the whole process."

In the UK, customers' airports of choice have always been Shannon

in Ireland and Stansted in the UK. Luton and East Midlands are second tier choices depending on destination and number of animals involved. Small animals are also regularly imported through Heathrow on belly carriers.

Animal transportation is governed by IATA's Live Animals Regulations (LAR), which were updated at the end of 2017. Lazarev says: "It is a 'must follow' rule for all supply chain stakeholders, and

most importantly, it is required for the well-being of the animals. These rules and standards have been created to achieve unification of transportation process/procedures and achieve the required level of animal safety."

IATA has also issued Addendum I to the 43rd Edition of the LAR which raises awareness of the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. Most carriers around the world, with ABC and VDA being no exception, have already accepted and strictly follow this.

Following the success of its CEIV standards for pharmaceuticals, IATA has launched a new

standardized global certification program to improve the safety and welfare of animals travelling by air. The Center of Excellence for Independent Validators for Live Animals Logistics (CEIV Live Animals) provides stakeholders across the air cargo supply chain with the assurance that CEIV Live Animals certified companies are operating to the highest standards in the transport of live animals.

Lazarev says: "AirBridgeCargo understands the value and significance of CEIV certification, having been through this process with pharmaceuticals and gaining its certification in 2016. At the moment we are reviewing the possibility for CEIV Live Animals. However it is a complex and continuous process, which requires a lot of preliminary work to be done. Our main goal here is to create a comfortable, unified, and safe ecosystem for animal transportation."

Over the years, ABC has been working with trusted and reliable ULD suppliers and giving it customers options to rent stalls, crates or kennels, which simplifies the transportation and gives them extra peace of mind.

All animals require special attention and care and transportation of every one poses some challenge to ABC's specialists.

However, creatures such as pandas, belugas or giraffes require different equipment and conditions. Preliminary work is needed to ensure the shortest possible journeys, for example,

Top tips for a trouble-free trip

Probably the single greatest issue in the transportation of live animals by air is avoiding stress, writes Tan Chee Hong, chief operating officer at Hong Kong airfreight handling company, Hactl.

Stress can be caused by a variety of factors such as unfamiliar noise and surroundings, excessive delays, and extreme variation in temperature. This can result in fatalities.

Hactl's top tips for animal shipments are:

- Always use a direct routing if possible to minimise transit times and avoid unnecessary handling and waiting during transshipments.

- Ensure all health certificates

potential problems such as snub nose dogs (boxers, pugs, bulldogs and Pekinese, for example) which have difficulty in maintaining a normal body temperature in hot weather. At such times their shipment is not recommended.

Physical issues

There are many considerations, and many of these are specific to particular animal types. For example, Hactl uses its dedicated horse handling centre to provide secure containment, and shallow angle ramps for unloading and loading competition horses to minimize risk of leg injuries. Pets



and export/import documents comply with regulations at origin, transit points and destination.

- Ensure the animal being transported is carried in a container suited to its type, size and weight, and which complies with IATA Live Animal Regulations.

- Ensure all animal containers are securely closed and locked to prevent escape.

- Provide a contact who is available 24 hours, in case of delay or emergency.

- Be aware of any specific

travelling on scheduled passenger flights require setting of suitable hold temperatures.

Many shipments, such as large scale horse events, or rare animals such as polar bears or Arctic foxes necessitate coordination meetings between Hactl and other stakeholders including airlines, and the shipper or consignee, security agents, other ramp handlers and government bodies.

Hactl usually cordons off the route to and from the horse handling

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centre for equine operations, and conducts preparations such as sanitization of all areas being used, along with horse stalls or containers; ULD weighing; towing or escorting to or from the apron; and arranging closest possible vehicle parking to minimize the apron travel. After the shipment, all areas of the terminal and its facilities which have been used are re-sanitised.

Paperwork or health/sanitary issues

Necessary documents include a Shipper's Certification for all live animals, plus CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) document if the animal is protected or endangered; a Health Certificate; the Permits of the countries of export, transshipment and import; and a completed IATA Live Animal checklist.

Recent developments

Following the success of CEIV Pharma, IATA is now pushing for

CEIV-Live Animals certification, which Hactl firmly supports. However, its experience with CEIV-Pharma certification was that airlines continued to

conduct their own audits and required its staff to undergo mandatory training, even though Hactl itself had been certified.

Rules and regs

Animals from outside the EU must enter the EU through a relatively limited number of Border Inspection Posts (BIPs) or other suitable facilities. It is possible for an animal to be transhipped at an airport with a BIP - for example Frankfurt or Amsterdam and go through the BIP procedures there, but it must still arrive at a UK airport that has suitable facilities for animals and an approved pet-checker.

With the exception of Heathrow, which can handle all types and sizes of creatures, BIPs in the UK generally specialise in specific animals. Edinburgh, for instance, handles small animals (which can also include small birds, reptiles and fish) while Prestwick handles bovines and equines.

It is also possible to import a

pet through a non-BIP airport provided that airport has the required facility operated by an approved pets checker. This only applies for pet dogs, cats and ferrets arriving under the pet travel scheme. However, if the pet is for sale or arriving five days outwith the arrival of its owner or has not been owned for more than six months it must be processed through a BIP.

For importing pets into the UK, there is the Pet Passport scheme for EU countries and a range of others such as Norway. But there is also a category called 'Listed Countries' such as US, Mexico, Hong Kong for which the pet passport can also be used.

To import an animal from a non-listed country, if it is a pet dog cat or ferret, it can travel from a

What's good for pets is good for passengers too

Virgin Atlantic Cargo's accompanied pets service also helps put bums on seats, says managing director Dominic Kennedy. He explains: "In around 60% of cases, owners like to travel on the same flight as their pets so having such a positive reputation for our pets product means we also generate business for our passenger team too."

Virgin Atlantic launched its pets service for cats and dogs

15 years ago and since then has safely delivered over 27,000 dogs and cats. Kennedy adds: "We are seeing significant growth in pet shipments and May 2018 was our best month ever in terms of pet revenues, boosted by a big increase in bookings by pet agents in the US. Customers are choosing to work with us because we are the only carrier in the UK to offer a full booking, management and customs clearance service. We are also able to offer help and advice on other customs procedures and VAT exemptions."

The service complies with the IATA Live Animals Regulations, the worldwide standard for transporting live animals by commercial airlines. Kennedy says: "These are the most current and efficient practices

for live animal cargo operations and ensure shipments are problem-free and compliant with international and local regulations. Our whole approach is focused on the comfort and wellbeing of pets during their journey."

However, Virgin Atlantic Cargo is aware of the CEIV standard and is looking into what this could mean for customers.

The carrier has a dedicated pet reception at Heathrow, which is very popular with owners because it offers a calm environment for their pets before the start of their journey. Most of the pets carried into the UK are collected by their owners from the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre, which is the Live Animal Border Inspection Post for the airport.

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