

Southwest Airlines Welcomes Pets Onboard

Small cats and dogs in carriers to count as passenger's carry-on bag.

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Pet owners who fly Southwest Airlines will soon be allowed to take small cats and dogs along with them on the plane, according to the discount carrier.

The pets who are granted "Freedom to Fly" access must be small enough to fit in carriers that can be stowed under the passenger's seat. Customers can soon start to take along their small cats and dogs in the aircraft cabin for a special "pet fare" of \$75 each way, or \$150 roundtrip.

The pet carrier will be counted as the passenger's carry-on bag. People can buy tickets for their pets starting Monday, June 1, 2009, for travel beginning June 17, 2009.

"We know from customer and employee feedback that our new 'pet' customers will be a welcomed addition to any flight," said Gary Kelly, Southwest Airlines chairman, president and CEO. "Our enhanced boarding process has opened the window, allowing us to accommodate small pets comfortably on a Southwest flight – without impacting our efficiency."

The new pet policy is part of the airline's overall goal to enhance the service it provides, according to the company. At the same time, the new pet policy creates opportunities for incremental revenue growth.