

Three Dogs Die, One Injured During Flights

The U.S. Department of Transportation releases monthly airline-related dog incidents.

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Three dogs died and one dog was injured in unrelated air travel incidents during July, 2007, on U.S. flights, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's monthly air travel report that was released last week.

Alaska Airlines reported that a 9-year-old French Bulldog flew on July 25 in the cargo hold from Puerto Vallarta, Mex., to Los Angeles and had been working on a movie set in Mexico. The Bulldog arrived deceased, and the airline's incident report stated "death apparently caused by age and health complications of pet, possibly exacerbated by Mexican climate." The airline took no corrective action.

Continental Airlines reported two dog deaths in July. A 3-year-old English Bulldog died in transit on July 3 on a flight from Los Angeles to Orlando with a stop in Houston. The airline reported the dog appeared fine in Houston, but arrived in Orlando deceased. The airline's report cites a necropsy was performed by the dog's regular veterinarian who contributed the cause of death to "Brachycephalic airway syndrome exacerbated by hyperthermia and stress." The airline's report claims the dog's death was not transit-related and no corrective action was taken. Airline officials did not respond to inquiries regarding the dog's death by the time of this posting.

On July 27, a 2-year-old American Staffordshire Terrier died on a Continental Airlines flight from Birmingham, Ala., to Houston. The incident report states the veterinarian found no obvious cause of death; all transit-related procedures were properly performed and no corrective action was taken.

Northwest Airlines reported a dog (breed not given) was injured on a flight from Minneapolis to Houston on July 3. The report says the "dog sustained a small cut injury to its right paw when it escaped from its kennel during ground handling at IAH [Houston airport]. The dog was quickly recovered and placed back in its kennel." Northwest says the incident was caused by poor kennel design, as it was too flexible. The locking pins did not secure the door, allowing the dog to escape. Also, Northwest stated that the gate agent who accepted the kennel did not follow company policy requiring kennel doors to be secured with plastic straps. In response to the incident, the airline reiterated its kennel policy with all agents.

In addition to dog-related incidents, Delta Airlines reported two cats were lost on flights in July.

The Department of Agriculture states that they review airlines' incident reports for violations of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), such as kennel size or temperature breaches, and pursue those for further investigation if the department questions whether the AWA was violated, according to the department's animal care staff.

More than two million pets and live animals are transported by air each year in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.