



Press Release

AAFA Responds to U.S. Department of Transportation's New Rule on Traveling with Animals on Planes

Decision may reduce reactions; falls short of fully accommodating for asthma and allergies



Washington D.C., December 2nd, 2020 — Today the U.S Department of Transportation (DOT) released its final [Traveling by Air with Service Animals](#) rule. Under the rule, airlines are no longer required to recognize “emotional support animals” as service animals and can treat them as pets. For airlines choosing to put the rule to use, only dogs with qualified training to support people with disabilities will be allowed to fly as service animals.

According to the DOT, this means travelers will likely see fewer uncrated animals on planes and therefore experience fewer allergic reactions. It's a move that has general support from the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) with one recognized drawback.

“We're glad to see our community heard when it comes to experiences while traveling with asthma and allergies,” said Kenneth Mendez, CEO and president of AAFA. “While AAFA expressed support for key components of this proposal, we would still like to see a rule change to accommodate passengers with allergies or asthma who need distance from animals. This is a change AAFA recommended but was not included in this final ruling.”

“AAFA believes this decision will reduce the number of reactions by keeping pet owners without documented disabilities from abusing the system. But we will continue to ask the DOT for safer accommodations for travelers with asthma and allergies. For some people with asthma and allergies, traveling in a confined space with animals could trigger a life-threatening attack,” added Jenna Riemenschneider, director of advocacy at AAFA.

For more resources and information check out AAFA's tips for [Traveling with Asthma and Allergies](#).

You can also track AAFA's advocacy work here:

- [Traveling with Asthma and Allergies](#)
- [DOT Proposes New Rules for Animals on Planes](#)
- [Emotional Support Animals on Planes: AAFA Submits Comment to the DOT](#)

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About AAFA

Founded in 1953, AAFA is the oldest and largest non-profit patient organization dedicated to saving lives and reducing the burden of disease for people with asthma, allergies and related conditions through research, education, advocacy and support. AAFA offers extensive support for individuals and families affected by asthma and allergic diseases, such as food allergies and atopic dermatitis (eczema). Through its online patient support communities, network of local chapters and affiliated support groups, AAFA empowers patients and their families by providing practical, evidence-based information and community programs and services. AAFA is the only asthma and allergy patient advocacy group that is certified to meet the standards of excellence set by the National Health Council. For more information, visit www.aafa.org.