



**WORKING PAPER**

**ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes**

**LEGAL PROTECTION OF PETS IN INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT —  
COLOMBIAN EXPERIENCE**

(Presented by Colombia and supported by 14 Latin American Civil Aviation  
Commission (LACAC) Member States<sup>2</sup>)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper presents Colombia's experience in regulating the air transport of pets, emotional support animals and assistance and service dogs, to be considered during the 42nd Assembly as a basis for recommendations to other States with a view to standardizing the transport of these types of animals in the cabin.

**Action:** The Assembly is invited to:

- a) review Colombia's experience regulating the air transport of pets, emotional support animals, and assistance and service dogs;
- b) issue recommendations on the subject to other States; and
- c) support the adoption of Standards and Recommended Practices for the carriage by air of pets, emotional support animals and assistance and service dogs, incorporating as a minimum the aspects based on Colombia's regulatory experience in this area.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goals <i>Every Flight is Safe and Secure</i> , <i>Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for All</i> and <i>Aviation is Environmentally Sustainable</i> .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Although transporting these types of animals may involve some costs to commercial air carriers, which in some cases might be passed on to passengers, this paper has no significant financial implications.
<i>References:</i>	Colombian Aviation Regulations, RAC 3, <i>Actividades Aéreas Civiles</i> United States Department of Transportation. Pets. <a href="http://www.transportation.gov/tags/pets">www.transportation.gov/tags/pets</a> (2020, accessed 27 December 2021) Condor Ferries. Pet travel statistics 2020–2021. <a href="http://www.condorferries.co.uk/pet-travel-statistics">www.condorferries.co.uk/pet-travel-statistics</a> (2020, accessed 27 December 2021)

<sup>1</sup> Spanish version provided by Colombia.

<sup>2</sup> Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 Over half of the world's population is estimated to have a pet at home, totaling more than one billion pets worldwide. This trend has grown in recent years due to demographic and sociocultural changes among new generations, higher income levels, the positive impact of pets on people's health, particularly those with certain medical conditions, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.1.2 There is also a growing empathy towards animals and a greater awareness of the need to respect and protect them. This has led to their being regarded not only as companions, but also as providers of emotional support, guides for the visually impaired, and assistance or service animals—in some cases even being considered family members.

1.1.3 Particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a marked increase in pet ownership, apparently to alleviate the loneliness caused by isolation. As a result, once air operations were resumed, transporting pets and other companion animals became a daily and increasingly widespread practice.

1.1.4 The transport of pets has increased by 19 per cent over the past decade, and more than 2 million pets and other live animals are transported by air each year in the United States alone.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. DISCUSSION

### 2.1 Implications of the carriage of pets, emotional support animals and assistance and service dogs for civil aviation

2.1.1 However, the air transport of these animals should not be allowed to proceed in any which way, since it can not only compromise the health or life of the animal itself and hygiene conditions on board, as well as the health and comfort of passengers, but it can also pose a safety risk.

2.1.2 Animals in the cabin that are inadequately placed, oversized or in large numbers could obstruct access to the aircraft's emergency or survival equipment and/or hinder the emergency evacuation process, thereby compromising the safety and wellbeing of passengers and crew.

2.1.3 Under normal conditions, animals are transported in the hold of the aircraft, provided it is pressurized and air-conditioned or otherwise fitted to ensure their health and wellbeing. However, there are cases in which animals may need to travel in the cabin for emotional support, assistance or service purposes. To be carried in the cabin, very specific requirements need to be met to avoid any such adverse effects as mentioned above.

2.1.4 Colombia has issued and updated regulations for the carriage of animals in the cabin due to increasing demand, even though air transport services are primarily meant for people.

2.1.5 These regulations have been coordinated with our State's public health and animal health requirements to establish guidelines on the presence and carriage of animals in public transport, in parallel with the aviation authority's civil aviation safety and security requirements.

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<sup>3</sup> United States Department of Transportation. Pets. [www.transportation.gov/tags/pets](http://www.transportation.gov/tags/pets), 2020.  
Condor Ferries. Pet travel statistics 2020–2021. [www.condorferries.co.uk/pet-travel-statistics](http://www.condorferries.co.uk/pet-travel-statistics), 2020.

2.1.6 While other States have issued their own regulations on this subject, those regulations are not necessarily compatible with or aligned with any international standard. Thus, although the carriage of certain animal species or the conditions under which it occurs may be acceptable to some States, it may not be acceptable to others. An animal lawfully shipped and transported from one State under stipulated conditions may not be admitted in the States of Transit or the State of Destination.

2.2 **Suggested minimum guidelines for international regulations**

2.2.1 Considering the above, the following are the most relevant aspects from the Colombian experience that may be taken into account in the development of an international standard or recommended practice for the carriage of animals in the cabin.

2.2.2 Minimum elements to be considered in a regulation:

2.2.2.1 Owners' responsibilities, including vaccination requirements, provision of necessary animal care items (collar, leash, food, waste management, etc.), acceptance of the assigned placement in the cabin and compliance with cabin crew instructions.

2.2.2.2 Permitted and prohibited animal species, as some may pose a danger to people or other animals in the cabin.

2.2.2.3 Animal's health and hygiene conditions, animal carrier specifications, animal's anatomy, physiology, age and behaviour as criteria for admission in the passenger cabin to mitigate risks from pressure changes, noise, temperature, etc.; ensure passenger wellbeing; prevent damage to the aircraft (for example cable damage caused by rodents); and ensure safety.

2.2.2.4 Verification of legal requirements for the carriage of animals by air, ensuring compliance with applicable regulations on protected or endangered species and species whose transport and/or possession is prohibited.

2.2.2.5 Sufficient advance notice to the operator to allow for necessary arrangements and to secure space on the aircraft.

2.2.2.6 Placing animals in areas of the aircraft where their presence will not hinder evacuation or access to emergency or survival equipment.

2.2.2.7 Number, size and weight of animals allowed in the cabin according to aircraft capacity, to avoid risks during emergency evacuation and changes in aircraft weight and balance.

2.2.2.8 Placing animals in a manner that minimizes disturbance to passengers.

2.2.2.9 Relocating passengers with allergies or other health conditions that may be triggered by proximity to an animal.

2.2.2.10 Requiring the use of cages, crates or containers, with indication of their required characteristics (materials, weight, dimensions to fit under passengers' seats, etc.), along with a description of cases where the use of these items is not mandatory.

2.2.2.11 Requiring animals to wear a collar, leash and muzzle while outside their carrier if these items do not impede normal breathing due to the animal's physical morphology.

2.2.2.12 Prohibition to open the carrier during the flight, unless absolutely necessary.

2.2.2.13 One animal or carrier per passenger.

2.2.2.14 Maximum number of animals and/or carriers per flight, depending on the size and capacity of the aircraft, to ensure an emergency evacuation procedure is not compromised.

2.2.2.15 Conditions of stay at airports prior to boarding and after disembarkation and measures to prevent unintentional release during such stays.

2.2.2.16 Prohibition, under any and all circumstances, to bring animals into the cockpit.

2.2.2.17 Animal carriage fees and provision of timely and clear information to passengers prior to the purchase of airline tickets.

2.2.2.18 Forms to be completed to verify:

- a) a passenger's need to travel with an emotional support animal, as determined by the treating healthcare professional (physician, psychiatrist or psychologist, as applicable); and
- b) animals' health condition and behaviour, to ensure they do not compromise health, hygiene and safety on board.

2.2.2.19 Verification of requirements at airport of origin, transit airports and destination airport.

2.2.2.20 Inclusion of pets, emotional support animals and assistance and service dogs in programmes for provision of assistance to aircraft accident victims.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 In view of the rise in pet ownership and the increasing demand from passengers to carry their pets in the cabin, it is essential to establish International Standards and Recommended Practices in this area. This will facilitate their carriage without compromising safety or civil aviation, while ensuring passengers' health, comfort and wellbeing and the facilitation and efficiency of international air transport.

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