

News Eng. ①



No horses or peacocks: US limits service animals on planes to dogs

Transportation department said passengers bringing unusual animals had 'eroded public trust in legitimate service animals'

Associated Press

Wed 2 Dec 2020 19.20 GMT

The government has decided that when it comes to air travel, only dogs can be service animals, and non-human companions used for emotional support don't count.

The transportation department issued a final rule Wednesday that aims to settle years of tension between airlines and passengers who bring their pets on board for free by saying they need them for emotional support.

For years, the department required airlines to allow animals with passengers who had a doctor's note saying they needed the animal for emotional support.

Airlines believed passengers abused the rule to bring a menagerie of animals on board including cats, turtles and pigs.

Still, airlines have turned away some animals in the past.

In one case in 2018, a passenger attempted to take her emotional support peacock on a cross-country flight, but the peacock was turned away. Later that year a woman was removed from a plane in Florida after she boarded with her emotional support squirrel.

Perhaps the most distressing case was that of a college student who flushed her emotional support dwarf hamster, Pebbles, down an airport toilet after being told she could not travel.

The transportation department said Wednesday that it was rewriting the rules partly because passengers carrying unusual animals on board “eroded the public trust in legitimate service animals”.

It also cited the increasing frequency of people “fraudulently representing their pets as service animals”, and a rise in misbehavior by emotional-support animals.

The rule will likely prevent Flirty, a miniature service horse, from flying in the passenger cabin in the future. The horse made waves in 2019 after its owner took it on board a flight leaving Chicago.

The new rule will force passengers with emotional-support animals to check them into the cargo hold, and pay a pet fee or leave them at home. The agency estimated airlines will gain up to \$59.6m a year in pet fees.

Under the final rule, which takes effect in 30 days, a service animal is a dog trained to help a person with a physical or psychiatric disability.

Advocates for veterans and others had pushed for inclusion of psychiatric service dogs.

Airlines will be able to require owners to vouch for the dog’s health, behavior and training. Airlines can require people with a service dog to turn in paperwork up to 48 hours before a flight, but they can’t bar those travelers from checking in online like other passengers.

Airlines can require that service dogs to be leashed at all times, and they can bar dogs that show aggressive behavior. There have been incidents of emotional-support animals biting passengers.

The transportation department stood by an earlier decision to prohibit airlines from banning entire dog breeds.

That is a setback for Delta Air Lines, which banned “pit bull type dogs” in 2018, a move that was criticized by disability advocates.

Delta, however, is giving no indication of backing down. In a statement, a Delta spokeswoman said the airline is reviewing the new rule but, “At this time, there are no changes to Delta’s current service and support animal policies.”

(not) count, abuse, distressing, advocate, vouch for, bar, stand by, set back, back down

Does the rule on service animals make sense to you?

When you need emotional support, who or what do you turn to?

In your opinion, why don't cats count as service animals?

If you were the collage student with the dwarf hamster, what would you have done?

Would you sit next to Flirty? If not, what would you do?

What is the strangest thing you have witnessed on public transportation?

What is the best thing about air travel?

What is unpleasant about air travel?

When have you refused to back down?

When have you stood by a friend?

----- is distressing.