

How to take your (small) dogs or cats to Belize from the US! (2016 rules)

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How to get your dog into Belize from the US, can be stressful, complicated, and there is WAY too much information out there to make sense of it. You will feel like you have no idea what you are doing, and that what you are doing is probably wrong. I successfully brought my dog in and out once and just went through the process of taking him back in, and it was pretty painless, so I thought I'd share a step by step guide to make it easier for anyone researching this!

Note: here is the official latest info; right now it hasn't changed in a while.

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/regulations/vs/iregs/animals/downloads/bh_cat_dog.pdf

1.) Before anything else, get your plane tickets squared away- you need at least a month to get the pet thing figured out. I fly United, and they are very pet friendly. Caveat - my dog is really small so he can go in the cabin with me. If you are traveling with your dog as cargo, I will have missed a few steps for you. I know Delta has just changed their pet restrictions and most can't fly your dog as cargo during certain times of year. This whole thing is a much bigger pain for you.

Plane tickets - with United, I have to make a phone call to customer service to find out what flights are dog friendly (they have a limit on how many dogs per flight, and some planes are too small). If you just try to book online and check the "I have a pet" box, they won't let you book. Also, I don't book over the phone because you get charged now for phone bookings. Hang up with nice lady on the phone, get online and book tickets, and call back. The operator will confirm that you can have dogs on the flight you booked, and charge you \$125 per way (:() and also give you a confirmation # for your pup. Make sure you leave 2-3 hours at layovers for your sanity, so you can go let the dog use the bathroom outside.

2.) First step - you need an "Import Permit" from The Belize Animal Health Administration (BAHA). This is issued by BAHA to the airport and is there when you arrive, but note that the BAHA people are only at the airport between about 9-5, 7 days a week - so schedule your incoming flight during that time. To get the permit, first print out this application:

<http://www.baha.org.bz/images/files/Application%20form%20for%20imports/Animal%20and%20Anim>

[al%20Products%20Application%20Form.pdf](#).

Attach application to an email and send to this address: animalhealth@baha.org.bz. Current person I talked to was Ms. Melody Robateau; she is very nice.

Here is her other contact info:

Ms. Melody Robateau
Administrative Assistant/Permit Officer
Animal Health Department
Belize Agricultural Health Authority
Central Farm, Cayo District, BELIZE, C. America
Tel: (501) 824 4899/72/73
Fax: (501) 824 4889/3773

They are pretty good - they usually email you the permit within a week and it is good for 90 days - so you technically have a 90 day window to schedule your flight. Please note I did have to call this last time and it took 2 weeks, so don't wait too long. Print a copy of the permit they email you to have on hand at the airport just in case.

3.) You have to see a USDA certified vet no more than 10 days before your trip. If you don't have one, call around to vet offices and ask if they do travel forms for pets. My vet made me go through Pet Relocation - because vets have gotten sued in the past when people showed up in other countries with dogs and then had problems. Pet Relocation (if you choose to use, you don't have to unless specified) (<http://www.petrelocation.com/>) will try to sell you a whole bunch of services, but you don't need them to ship your pet for you - you will feel like a wreck the first time you do this, convinced that your pet will be quarantined, but then after you do it once you will be a master. Just tell them you are going to Belize and want them to email you the latest rules. Latest rules say that vet needs to fill out 3 forms: the APHIS form, an Airline health form, and flea/tick free form.

APHIS form (if you want to print and bring in):

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/forms/pdf/APHIS7001.pdf> Pet Relocators told me I needed the Certification of Treatment against Ticks and Tapeworms, which I purchased here (and was never asked for, but just pay the few bucks and get them-I can't find it free anywhere)

<http://www.pettravelstore.com/pet-passport-ticks-tapeworm-certificate/> Pet Relocators also told me I needed this (this may be only for certain airlines, or if pet is traveling cargo, but it is free so just print it and have it on you!

<http://www.moypes.net/download/aviocertifikat.pdf>

I brought these 3 forms with me to the appointment and your vet will fill them out. NOTE - your dog has to have proof of rabies shot and it has to be more than 30 days out from your travel time (their first shot can't be within 30 days of your trip). I also brought my proof of rabies shots with me on the trip just in case.

Here is another source of free forms that can be helpful if you are told you need any others:

<http://www.dryfur.com/library-of-free-pet-airline-shipping-forms.htm>

This last part gets tricky and annoying.

Make your vet appointment for the first thing in the morning. Then, immediately after your appointment, you have to go to a FedEx office and overnight these to your local USDA office, because a SECOND veterinarian (USDA approved) has to stamp your APHIS form. (Unless you are lucky enough to live driving distance to one - then, call them and find out if you can show up). Here are the USDA offices:

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>

So you have to FedEx overnight to USDA - the original APHIS form vet #1 just filled out, the rabies proof of vaccine, and then hand write a note that says they can charge your credit card \$38 for the stamp fee. (This is the current cost, call to find out if it has changed.) You also need to enclose a SECOND (same kind of overnight shipping) envelope that is self addressed, prepaid overnight as they will ship these forms right back to you (this will not be their first rodeo, they know you need to get these right back - I sent mine in Monday afternoon and got them back Wednesday afternoon).

When I went to FedEx, they made me sign up for an account which was a little annoying, word of warning. While I was there I had them make copies of everything I was sending just in case. You will receive these forms back within the week before you leave. **THIS IS THE STRESSFUL PART!!!!** You can't guarantee that you will receive these forms, that the USDA vet will sign, that they won't get lost, etc. We could start whining about why the system is set up to be so last minute, as it really is stressful. But, I am sure they have their reasons, so you just have to do it this way :). I mean, most people have zero anxiety/things on your mind/racing thoughts the week before a major move or international trip anyway, right?

Finally, the first time I flew with my dog Sticks, I actually stopped by the United Airlines desk a few days before my flight, to show them my pet travel bag, to ensure it was OK. I once met a guy who was traveling with a pet, and he found out last minute that his bag wasn't OK, and it screwed up everything for him. Don't be like him.

I will also tell you my experience of showing up at the Belize Airport. (By the way, if you are taking a

puddle jumper after your other flight, they don't give a hoot about your lap dog. I took my dog out of the bag on that flight, no charge and you don't have to worry about that one on Tropic Air. Love them.) When you show up at the airport, I was very concerned about letting my dog pee, and this was not an option for a while. You have to get in line for immigration and customs, and then right past customs they will show you to a door that says BAHA. The guys in there were very nice. They just looked at my APHIS form, made a couple jokes (is that a dog or a hamster LOLZ (he's 4 pounds)), and charged me about \$65 Belize dollars for the dog permit. I THEN was able to finally find a door on our way to check in for our Tropic flight (door to the right) where the dog finally peed.

Finally, I want to note that getting the dog back INTO the US was a total cake walk compared to this. All I needed to do was go to a Belizean Vet within 10 days before we flew out, and he filled out a form (International Vet Certificate) saying the dog had all his shots. At customs, the guys just eyeballed the form and we were on our way. That is literally all it takes to bring dogs back into the US.

Let me summarize and organize this by saying- the papers you should have when you leave for Belize are the following:

- 1.) APHIS form signed by your vet and stamped by USDA vet (no one but you will know/care about all the hard work you did for this form. Nice work. There.)
- 2.) The 2 forms stated above (flea/tick and the IATA form)
- 3.) A copy of the Import Permit just in case
- 4.) Proof of rabies shots just in case

And that's it! Your dog will love Belize....it is my dog's favorite place in the world :)

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