



The transport of animals by air requires specialist knowledge, but it is ultimately an incredibly rewarding area of the industry to work in, writes **Damian Brett**

**T**HERE is no more precious cargo than animals. When being transported by airfreight, they require constant care and attention and the failure to do so can have deadly consequences.

Over the years a number of companies have developed specialist services in the transport of animals.

Racehorses in particular receive special treatment as a stress free flight can be the difference between winning and losing a race.

Qatar Airways is well known for its transportation of horses and the airline told *Air Cargo News* about the lengths it will go to ensure the horses it transports travel in comfort.

Qatar chief officer cargo Ulrich Ogiermann says that it provides dedicated facilities, equine health care and transport experts to ensure the animals' wellbeing during transit.

It even offers a five-star horse hotel at its home base in Doha.

To give an example of the lengths the airline will go to, Ogiermann highlights the transport of 40 show jumping and dressage horses from Amsterdam to Las Vegas in April to participate in the International Federation of Equestrian Sports' World Cup Finals.

A B777F aircraft was especially chartered and equipped with air stables, and each of the horses shared an air stall on board the freighter with only one other horse, although up to three horses can be transported side-by-side in the air stables.

They were accompanied by 10 grooms and a veterinarian on their journey from Schiphol Amsterdam to McCarran International Airport, Las Vegas.

"Ensuring the wellbeing of the animal throughout transit is our priority, while keeping connection times to a minimum is also important, as well as providing qualified and dedicated staff and the best possible facilities for different types of animals," says Ogiermann.

This view was reflected by Charlie McMullen, global sales and development manager, from charter company Intradco Global.

Intradco divides its animal services into three categories: equine, exotics and livestock.

McMullen says that scheduled freighter flights have been winning market share from charters for the transport of animals over the last few years because of the cost savings scheduled flights can offer.

But, he says, there are benefits to using charter aircraft, such as more direct routes.

"Charter flights offer greater flexibility but usually come at a higher cost," he says.

"So when considering a charter there needs to be a good number of horses to make it happen, although we have put just two horses on a 747 before."



*'Ensuring the wellbeing of the animal throughout transit is our priority, while keeping connection times to a minimum is also important'*

"It also depends on the client's budget," he adds. "If we are moving low quality horses – sales horses for example – you must ensure the flight is filled in order to make the charter price effective."

"If we are moving expensive racehorses where the trainer understands the value of fewer stops than you would find on a scheduled movement, the trainer may not want the extra transit time."

"Using a scheduled flight could also mean extra trucking. They could have to truck the horses to Europe from Ireland for example, whereas if we can offer a charter solution directly from Shannon then the extra cost may be worth it to them because they may have more chance of winning."

Intradco's charter services have also benefited from its takeover in 2013 by charter company Chapman Freeborn, as it is now able to backload freighters with cargo from its parent company, reducing costs for customers.

The fact it caters for livestock and exotic animals as well as horses also helps with pairing up flights.

"If you imagine how many horses and cattle are moving around the world at any one time, we can pair up our flights," he says.

"So if we have horses going from Ireland to America, we also have cattle coming out of Canada into Europe so a lot of our flights are linked together, and that's come through years of experience of knowing when these flights are going to happen."

Another benefit of a direct charter flight is reduced risk of countries not having agreements in place for the transport of animals.

For instance, animals that transit in

Belgium on their way to Hong Kong are rejected because the two do not have an agricultural agreement.

Both Intradco and Qatar agree it is important for horses to be accompanied by grooms and vets during their transport.

However, McMullen says recent constraints have emerged that are causing an issue with people accompanying animals during transport.

He says that airlines are increasingly ordering freighter aircraft with fewer jump seats to cater for the carers. But he adds that airlines that do have the ability to offer seating could win business as a result.

Another issue with access is the fact that the US Federal Aviation Administration recently issued a ban on grooms entering the maindeck of the cargo area.

With horses needing constant care because of their temperamental nature, the ban is causing real issues with the transport of horses.

However, McMullen says the majority of airlines have approached the FAA and hope to have the ban overturned soon.

Pets also require a lot of care and attention during transport, while their owners also need reassurance that their animals are okay, says Kenya Airways area cargo manager Katrina Hanson.

"Owners are very emotive about pets," she says. "We talk the passenger through what happens and explain that the lights are left on, that there is heating in the aircraft, that the captain is aware pets are on board and we ask our passenger team, once the pet is settled in the hold, to let the passenger know their

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## AIA Pets

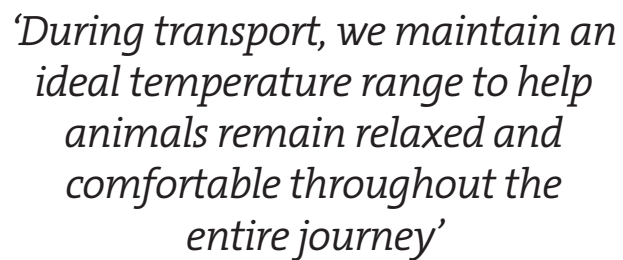
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McMullen says companies that specialise in the transport of animals are less likely to suffer an incident of this nature.







But he says there are a number of companies entering the market which do not have enough experience, this when live animals are being transported can have dire consequences.

These types of incidents can also result in airlines refusing to carry animals because of concern over bad press and being targeted by campaigners.

It only takes a cursory Google search to discover the level of scrutiny that airlines come under when transporting animals.

However, the number of incidents does appear to be being reduced, in the US at least.

US Department of Transportation figures show that 17 animals died during transport on US airlines in 2014; the lowest number in years. In 2010, for example, 39 deaths were reported.

International Pet and Animal Transportation Association president Manuel Leunda says: "Of course, we wish that no pet would die during transport but as we look at the bigger picture, the numbers are incredibly low and decreasing every year. Air travel is the safest and most humane mode of travel for pets."

Sally Smith, who owns animal transportation agent Airborne Animals, says one of the reasons for the decrease in the number of incidents may be that more people are using professional pet shippers than ever before.

DOT publishes the reports it receives on incidents involving the loss, injury, or death of animals during air transportation in its monthly Air Travel Consumer Report, which is publicly available at [www.dot.gov/airconsumer](http://www.dot.gov/airconsumer).

At the start of this year, the department also introduced stricter reporting regulations regarding the loss, injury or death of animals during air transport.

The new rule will now include all US airline carriers that operate with at least one aircraft with more than 60 seats and will also include cats and dogs that are transported as a pet by its owner as excessive baggage or in cabin, as well as cargo shipments and breeder shipments.

The safety of animals during transport also comes down to the equipment they are transported in.

ported in.

As well as pets, Kenya Airways also transports day-old-chicks, which are being transported for breeding purposes, and exotic animals.

Day-old-chicks present a unique challenge because of their vulnerability and the time-sensitive nature of the cargo.

"The chicks are boxed in a certain way with a number of chicks per box and then they have chimneys, which are spacers to allow air to circulate, because you don't want the chicks in the middle to not get enough oxygen," says Hanson.

"The challenge with day old chicks is if anything happens to the flight because then they become two-day-old chicks.

"In that situation we talk to the customer and the chicks are looked after at the animal reception centre, then they will go on the flight the next day so they always get priority.

"It's only happened once over the last six years."

Qatar has moved towards the use of lighter horse boxes.

"Horse stalls that are used for air transport have improved in recent years," says Ogiermann.

"Where in the past wooden stalls were being used, nowadays most of the stalls are made of aluminum, which is stronger and safer for the horses.

"And because a lightweight material is being used to produce the stalls the reduction in weight has a positive impact on fuel costs."

McMullen warns that there is a balance to be achieved when it comes to reducing the weight of the horse boxes, as going too far can weaken the structure.

There have been some instances of horses kicking through the walls of the structure.

Intradco, which also builds equipment for transporting animals, plans to launch a new collapsible stall later this year.

Collapsible stalls offer cost savings as more space is available on return flights for other cargo but they also have an impact on loading and unloading.

Intradco's new stalls hope to overcome these issues while maintaining ergonomic benefits. ■



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# The really wild show

NOT a week goes by without a press release, about the transport of some kind of exotic animal, arriving in the email inbox of *Air Cargo News*.

But the unstoppable tide of pictures of bears, giraffes and lions being loaded onto a plane shouldn't distract from the fact that the transport of exotic animals is an extremely skilled area of air cargo.

Kenya Airways recently

roared into action to help transport two lionesses, who were rescued from a circus, from London Heathrow to Nairobi in January.

First they were transported from their temporary home in Belgium to London on the Eurostar before being taken to Heathrow.

Working with the Born Free animal charity, Kenya Airways then flew the lionesses 9,650km onboard a

B787 Dreamliner to Nairobi before connecting to Johannesburg and completing the journey to their new home at Shamwari Game Reserve, just outside of Port Elizabeth, by road.

With such a long journey ahead of them, keeping Maggie and Sonja safe and comfortable was paramount.

Kenya Airways area cargo manager Katrina Hanson says: "The challenges come with the bespoke animals such as the lions. It's something you don't have every day."

"The two sisters were coming in from Belgium so we had a logistics challenge to get them across the channel, they had special dispensation to come via the Euro-tunnel but that was the day of a fire so it was actually delayed and we were quite concerned that they weren't going to get across."

"When they got to Heathrow, we needed to make sure the animal reception centre was ready to have a look. We had a chat with Customs beforehand to try and mitigate

any delays because we knew they would want to check paperwork and we would have challenges with customs clearance."

In May, FedEx Express transported Kali the male polar bear, who was orphaned in Alaska as a cub, from Rochester in New York to a zoo in St Louis.

The big bear was flown from Rochester to Memphis in a metal transport box before being transported to his final destination by a temperature controlled truck.

To ensure Kali's safety, he was accompanied by Saint Louis Zoo's veterinarian and animal care staff for the entire day-long journey.

"Kali travelled on a regular service FedEx Express 767 aircraft from Rochester, New York, to Memphis, Tennessee in a specially-designed, 1,000-pound aluminium crate," a spokesperson for the express operator said.

"Travelling with him were one veterinarian and two attendants, who monitored his comfort throughout the flight." ■

## Airports in on the action

IT isn't just airlines, agents and charter companies that are developing an expertise in the transport of animals.

ARK Development, a subsidiary of leading real estate company Racebrook Capital, is building a multipurpose animal handling and air cargo facility at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport named the ARK.

Under a 30-year lease with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, The ARK at JFK has been conceived as the world's only privately owned animal terminal and USDA-approved, full-service, 24-hour, airport quarantine facility for import and export of horses, pets, birds and livestock.

The ARK managing director Aaron Perl says: "With demand for pets and animals of all kinds transported by air escalating year on year, we recognised the need for a more humane and efficient model for this significant segment of the air travel industry."

In May, selective demolition of an existing cargo facility at the airport began, marking the beginning of construction.

Racebrook hopes that substantial completion of the site will be completed in the first quarter of 2016, and commencement of operations shortly thereafter.

Subtenants already on board The ARK include Consolidated Aviation Services,

Paradise 4 Paws, which will provide services in its 1,850 sq m pet resort, spa and training centre for cats and dogs, and Life Care, a companion animal veterinary hospital, which will serve the general public around the clock for general medicine, emergency, critical care, internal medicine, surgery and advanced diagnostics.

Meanwhile, in March of this year, Virgin Atlantic Cargo and Heathrow's Animal Reception Centre (HARC) announced they were partnering for a trial of a 'check before you fly' service for travelling pets.

Until now, pets – and their owners – have had to endure the stress of not knowing if they meet the entry requirements of the UK Pet Travel Scheme until they arrive in the UK. But under the trial, from April, it will be possible to correct any errors or obtain additional information before travel.

The airline's director of cargo, John Lloyd, says: "Carrying pets is an important part of our business. Giving customers the opportunity to have all of their pets' paperwork checked prior to travel is a very welcome initiative."

"It will not only give pet owners peace of mind, it will also speed up the process of them being reunited with their pets on the day of arrival." ■

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