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“Moving pets abroad, has long been considered an expensive undertaking, but relocating with your furry friend needn't cost an arm and a paw.”



A Well Travelled Cat

By Carla Francis

In 2007, *approximately 2000 cats and 3000 dogs entered Australia from overseas. This was the year my cat Gershwin bid 'sayonara' to his native Japan and 'G'day' to the Land of Oz.

Gershwin, a silver tabby with piercing green eyes and pointy ears has come a long way from the snow capped mountains of his native Takayama. I could never fathom whether the Japanese were being overly polite when they felt obliged to label him an American Shorthair. Cute, or as the Japanese say 'Kawaii', he is - but a pedigree he is not.

Four years previously, I left my catless life in London and moved to Japan to be a teacher, for what I thought would be a year, but turned into four. Then, in 2007, an irresistible job offer Down Under would change both our lives forever. Faced with the big move from Tokyo to Sydney I set about researching how to travel internationally with my cat.

Moving pets abroad has long been considered an expensive undertaking, but relocating with your furry friend needn't cost an arm and a paw as I found out. There are various ways to cut costs, and make sure you both reach your destination safely. Eliminating the cost of using pet travel agencies was the first course of action. So, I contacted the airline directly, who referred me to Air Nippon, a cargo company which handles pets flying in and out of Japan.

It was here I made contact with a very amiable fellow by the name of Kota Takei, who knew precisely the course of action to take, and put my very worried mind at ease. Without such help, I am sure the process would have been a lot more stressful as the rules of importing pets are laden with strict rules and the risk of overlooking some are highly probable. However, with Kota's careful assistance I went ahead and contacted

Eastern Creek Quarantine Station, regarding Gershwin's impending arrival and booked him on a Qantas flight.

Japan falls into a Category 2 country, alongside the UK and USA, which means pets entering Australia from these countries are required to undertake the minimum stay of 30 days in quarantine. Eastern Creek which is located 40 kilometres west of Sydney city



can accommodate up to four hundred dogs and one hundred and forty cats. According to Kate Jones from AQIS, the majority of pets who stay at the quarantine station come from the EU and North America.

Prior to Gershwin's arrival, he was required to be micro chipped and vaccinated against cat flu, feline enteritis, feline rhinotracheitis and feline calicivirus. Once he had been vaccinated appropriately a permit could then be applied for. On the day of the flight, pets are given a health check by a vet and a treatment for parasites before boarding the flight. At the airport, your pet will need to have one more final check by an official veterinarian before they can board the flight. Official copies of the permit must travel with the pet and the owner.

On arrival in Sydney, a very jetlagged Gershwin was met by an AQIS staff member, who collected him from the airplane and then he was taken directly to the quarantine station.

Going to visit your pet in quarantine and not be able to take them home for a month was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do, but I would do it all again if I had to. Coming home to an empty flat in a new city is hard enough, but it would have been even harder without the welcome meow I am now greeted with at the door. Gershwin travelled approximately 4,869 miles (7,835 kilometres) to start his new life in Australia and spent a month locked away in quarantine. These days he prefers to travel around NSW seeking out new trees to climb and birds to watch. He is a definitely a well travelled cat.



*Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS), 2008