



**WORKING PAPER**

**FACILITATION PANEL (FALP)**

**FOURTEENTH MEETING**

**Montréal, 20 to 24 April 2026**

**Agenda Item 3: Amendments to Annex 9 — *Facilitation***

**PET IN AVIATION: ENHANCING ANIMAL WELFARE**

(Presented by Italy)

**SUMMARY**

This working paper addresses the increasing demand for the carriage of pets in the aircraft, driven by evolving social dynamics, growing recognition of animals as family members, and the demonstrated welfare, safety and facilitation implications of current practices. While some States have developed national regulations or operational guidelines, the absence of a shared global reference framework has resulted in fragmented approaches.

At the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly (A42), Colombia presented two working papers while Italy organised a Skytalk and presented an information paper on air transportation of pet.

The A42 ICAO Assembly decided to refer the actions proposed in the working papers to the Council, with contributions of relevant technical bodies, for further study and a proposed way forward.

**Action by the FAL Panel:**

The FAL Panel is invited to:

- note the above-mentioned Assembly decisions and the information described in this paper, taking into consideration the establishment of a dedicated Study Group (see ToR in Appendix A) with the objectives to provide a contribution to the Air Transport Committee for the Council discussion; and
- to develop an Action Plan (as proposed in Appendix B) to involve the relevant bodies, as described in paragraph 3.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The carriage of pets by air has become an increasingly common aspect of international travel, reflecting changes in passenger needs and expectations regarding the treatment and wellbeing of animals accompanying them.

1.2 In recent years, animal welfare has progressively emerged as a significant element within contemporary legal and societal frameworks, reflecting the growing recognition of animals as sentient beings. In the European context, the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) marked an important step by explicitly acknowledging animal welfare considerations within the Union's legal framework. Building on this evolution, Italy has further strengthened its national framework through the amendment of Article 9 of the Constitution in 2022, followed by the adoption of Law No. 82/2025, which enhanced the legal protection afforded to animals under criminal law.

1.3 Current operational practices generally allow only small pets to travel in the cabin, while animals exceeding established size or weight limits are transported in cargo holds. Although designed to ensure acceptable conditions, this approach may, in certain circumstances, raise concerns related to animal welfare.

1.4 Available experience suggests that, under clearly defined conditions and supported by appropriate procedures and risk mitigation measures, the presence of pets in the cabin can be managed without compromising safety or operational integrity. However, the lack of a harmonized international framework continues to create regulatory uncertainty and uneven levels of protection.

1.5 In parallel to the other ICAO technical bodies, the issue pet transportation merits consideration within the ICAO Facilitation Panel, with particular attention to ensuring consistency in application, predictability for passengers and operators, and adequate consideration of animal welfare alongside established aviation objectives.

## 2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Allowing pets to stay with their owners reduces barriers associated with separation, mitigates welfare-related concerns and supports smoother passenger journeys, without adversely affecting safety or operational requirements when appropriate measures are in place. Experience has shown that the possibility for pets to accompany passengers in the cabin, when subject to predefined conditions and safeguards, can contribute to a more accessible and predictable travel experience.

2.2 From a facilitation perspective, pets increasingly represent a factor influencing passengers' experience to travel, particularly when they are perceived as part of the family unit rather than as cargo or special baggage. The recognition of animals as sentient beings with a social function suggests that their carriage should be considered within the broader context of passenger facilitation and accessibility.

2.3 At the international level, however, it was recognized the lack of a common regulation for the air transport of pets. ICAO provisions remain limited in scope, focusing mainly on service animals accompanying persons with disabilities. The absence of Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) addressing the wider issue of in-cabin pet transportation has led to divergent national approaches and operational uncertainty for passengers, air operators and authorities alike.

2.4 Building on these developments, Colombia, supported by 15 Member States of the Latin American Civil Aviation (LACAC), has actively contributed to raising international awareness on the issue of air transport of pets, including through the presentation of two working papers at the latest ICAO

Assembly. As a result, the Assembly decided to refer the actions contained in the paper to the Council, with contributions of relevant technical bodies, for further study and a proposed way forward.

2.5 The A42 working papers recommended States to promote standardisation stressing the need for SARPs and ensuring safe, comfortable, accessible, efficient and passenger-focused transport. WP/447 proposed to develop changes to Annex 9 — *Facilitation* and harmonized procedures whilst WP/460 suggested in addition a list of elements to be included in international regulations.

2.6 Within the European context, there is a growing need to encourage a more coordinated approach at the global level. It would be desirable for ICAO to consider the establishment of common principles for the carriage of pets by air, taking also animal welfare and the evolving social role of pets.

2.7 In this regard, the experience developed in Italy represents a concrete example of a gradual and controlled facilitation-oriented approach. Italy has progressively expanded the conditions for in-cabin pet transportation through a step-by-step process. In 2024, the Italian Civil Aviation Authority (ENAC), authorized ITA Airways to extend the in-cabin weight limit for pets from 8 kg to 10 kg, representing at the beginning of a transition towards a regulatory framework more attentive to welfare considerations and operational flexibility.

2.8 Building on the positive outcomes of these initiatives, Italy has explored the extension of in-cabin transportation to larger pets, up to 30 kg, under strictly controlled conditions. In 2025, demonstration flights were conducted with ENAC's approval, allowing medium- and large-sized dogs to travel in the cabin to test operational measures, assess passenger compatibility and verify that safety procedures remained robust, drawing on the existing experience with assistance dogs and demonstrating that accessibility, animal welfare and operational requirements can be effectively balanced.

2.9 The Italian experience provides practical insights that may serve as a useful reference and benchmarking model for further international consideration.

2.10 The Facilitation Panel (FALP) provides an appropriate forum to raise awareness of pet transportation as an emerging facilitation issue and to promote a broader cultural understanding of pets as part of the passenger travel ecosystem. Addressing this topic within the facilitation framework may contribute to more inclusive, humane and harmonized air travel practices.

### **3. ACTIONS BY THE PANEL**

3.1 The FAL Panel is invited to recognize pet transportation as an emerging facilitation matter and to recommend ICAO to address the issue in a comprehensive manner, considering animal welfare, accessibility and operational considerations.

3.2 Based on the A42 decisions, ICAO as a whole should develop further study and propose a way forward by appoint a Study Group under the Terms of Reference in Appendix A and the proactive role of FALP and Italy.

3.3 To support the SG activity, an Action Plan, correlated with the ToR, is proposed in Appendix B, containing a list of matters associated with the relevant ICAO bodies where discussion is appropriate.

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## APPENDIX A

### PET IN AVIATION STUDY GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

<b>Background</b>	<p>The increasing demand for the carriage of pets by air, combined with evolving social expectations and growing recognition of animals as sentient beings, has highlighted the need for a more coordinated and harmonized approach at the international level. While some States have developed national practices or operational arrangements, the absence of a common global reference framework has resulted in fragmented approaches, regulatory uncertainty and uneven levels of facilitation, animal welfare protection and operational consistency.</p> <p>At the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly, the issue of air transport of pets was formally brought to the attention of ICAO through working and information papers, and the Assembly decided to refer the matter to the Council, with the involvement of the relevant technical bodies, for further study and identification of a way forward. In this context, the establishment of a dedicated Study Group would support ICAO in assessing the issue in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, while considering facilitation, safety, security, public health, operational and animal welfare considerations.</p>
<b>Scope</b>	<p>In order to support informed decision-making and avoid fragmented or unilateral approaches, the Study Group should examine the carriage of pets by air from a global perspective. This includes consideration of in-cabin transportation, associated facilitation aspects, operational conditions, safety and security implications, public health considerations, and the social role of pets as part of the passenger travel experience.</p> <p>The Study Group should also draw on existing SARPs, ICAO provisions, relevant international guidance, and national experiences, with a view to identifying areas where harmonized guidance and/or recommended practices may be beneficial.</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>The Study Group should support ICAO by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) examining current practices, challenges and risks associated with the carriage of pets by air;</li><li>b) identify gaps in existing international provisions and national approaches, and determine the elements that could support Member States in the development of appropriate policies, guidance and arrangements for the carriage of pets by air;</li></ul>

	<p>c) assessing how animal welfare considerations can be appropriately reflected within the facilitation framework, without compromising safety, security and operational requirements;</p> <p>d) identifying areas where SARPs under Annex 9 could be developed, where appropriate;</p> <p>e) supporting the development of an Action Plan involving the relevant ICAO bodies; and</p> <p>f) providing findings and recommendations to the Air Transport Committee for consideration by the Council.</p>
<b>Required expertise</b>	<p>Participation in the Study Group should be interdisciplinary in nature. The Study Group should be composed of experts nominated by the relevant ICAO technical bodies, reflecting the different areas involved in the carriage of pets by air.</p> <p>In particular, participation should include expertise related to facilitation and accessibility, safety and flight operations, aviation security, public health and cabin environment, airport operations, and other relevant technical domains, as identified in Appendix B of this WP.</p>
<b>Specific working arrangements</b>	<p>The work of the Study Group will be undertaken primarily by correspondence and teleconferences.</p>

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## APPENDIX B

### ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan governs the elements to be included in the ICAO international regulatory framework, as for instance as follows:

#### a) Accessibility (FALP/ATRP/AVSECP/ANC)

- i. Classification of animals for air transport purposes (FALP);
- ii. list of permitted, protected, or prohibited species; (FALP)
- iii. hygienic, health, and behavioural conditions of animals and related veterinary certifications, as well as identification documentation, to be provided well in advance of departure; (CAPSCA)
- iv. owner's declaration of responsibility (FALP/ATRP/LEB);
- v. use of muzzle, harness, and safety belt for animals when outside their carrier; (FALP/FLTOPSP/AIRP)
- vi. security screening devices and procedures; (AVSECP)
- vii. dedicated waiting areas and availability of hygiene facilities (FALP/ADOP)
- viii. training of ground personnel on animal handling at airports (FALP).

#### b) Safety, Welfare, and Cabin Health (ANC/CAPSCA)

- i. limitation to number, weight, and size of animals per passenger and per flight; (FLTOPSP)
- ii. requirements for carriers and restraint systems; (FLTOPSP)
- iii. training of flight personnel on managing pets in cabin or on board;
- iv. air quality and HEPA filtration; (AIRP/CAPSCA)
- v. information to passengers at the time of booking and reallocation procedures in case of allergies or phobias; (FALP)
- vi. floor protection; (ANC)
- vii. emergency evacuation procedures; (ANC/FLTOPSP/AIRP)
- viii. demonstration flights and practical tests to assess safety, compatibility and human and animal welfare; (ANC/FLTOPSP/AIRP)
- ix. inclusion of support animals in assistance programs for victims of air accidents.