

Feds Release Flight-Related Cat Incident Data for December

Three cats escaped kennels in separate incidents following flights.

Posted: February 12, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

There were three separate instances in December where cats on airline flights between cities managed to escape their cat carriers and run away, according to a U.S. Department of Transportation report released Feb. 7.

The most recent case occurred Dec. 28, 2006, when a passenger checked a female cat in a cat carrier on Lufthansa Airlines from Manchester England to Munich with a connection to a United Airlines flight to Washington D.C. Upon arrival in Washington, the cat carrier door was ajar and it was empty. The aircraft hold was checked as well as adjoining aircraft areas, but the cat was not found at that time. However, the cat was discovered on the same aircraft three weeks later in Denver.

The cat was "immediately taken to a veterinarian hospital where she was treated for dehydration, released and delivered to the owner," according to a United Airlines report. The cat and her owner, who lives in Washington, have been reunited.

On Dec. 26, a cat of unknown breed and age that was offloaded from the cargo hold of a Delta Airlines flight from Washington, D.C. to New York City forced his way out of his cat carrier. The cat escaped down a ramp and attempts to catch him were unsuccessful, according to the airline. A subsequent investigation found that the bolt and lock nut securing two halves of the cat carrier were missing.

On Nov. 30, 2006, a cat escaped its kennel while it was unloaded from a Northwest Airlines flight to Orlando, Fla., from Detroit. The cat's escape occurred because the cat carrier door came unlatched and opened during handling. An extensive search did not locate the cat. Although the incident happened in November, it was included in Northwest's December statistics because the case was not closed until Dec. 18.

A total of 26 animal fatalities — mostly dogs — occurred before, during or after air transport in 2006. Eleven animals were injured and 12 animals were lost at United States airports, according to Department of Transportation statistics.