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Alice M. Wagner

The Humane Society of the United States

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Problems in Transportation of Animals

By Mrs. Alice M. Wagner

HSUS Secretary; former editor, *Popular Dogs*

Springfield, New Jersey

This afternoon we are considering the problems involved in the transportation of animals. Undoubtedly we have all had people problems as we travel by car, train and by air, and with the increase of travel things seem to be growing worse instead of better. I commuted from my home in New Jersey to Philadelphia for 18½ years – a round trip of five hours – so I know plenty of things that can happen in transportation and commutation.

So it is with animals. An increasing number of animals are being shipped – shipped as pets, shipped as meat animals, for zoos, for laboratory work. There are so many ramifications to the transportation of animals that first let me tell you how I became interested in this subject. About 18 or 19 years ago I was shocked to learn of the brutality involved in shipping meat animals when I saw two pictures. One was of a man laughing and twisting the tail of an injured cow that had fallen from a truck. When he twisted the tail hard enough, the cow tried to get to her feet. The other picture was of a newborn calf. An electric prod was being used to get it on its feet and in a truck. I wrote for the pictures and published them in *Popular Dogs*. The reaction from readers of the magazine was immediate. People were angered and wanted to help.

Then I received one phone call from a man who was really angry. He told me in no uncertain terms that I had not given him or his humane group a credit line. And, as you know, a credit line is important to a newspaperman or a humane worker. It was Fred Myers. Fred was both a newspaperman and a humane worker. So, he was doubly angry. When I told him it was an oversight and I promised to help him on all humane problems, which I did from then on, Fred and I became close friends and continued to cooperate on humane work from 1951 until his death.

A few years later I invited Mr. John Macfarlane, Director of the Livestock Department of the Massachusetts SPCA, to write a series of articles for my magazine. I had and still have great admiration and respect for Mr. Macfarlane and his work and wonderful accomplishments. I learned a great deal from him. One thing he said years ago still applies today. He said, "If you can show a businessman where he can make a little more profit, he is more likely to listen to your suggestions about humane treatment and technical changes." I have used this approach through the years in my work with purebred dogs, and it certainly does work. I used it on breeders, I used it on shippers, I used it on airlines.

Although *Popular Dogs* is a purebred dog magazine, I published many articles on meat animals and slaughter. I learned that the greatest percentage of meat animals are raised west of the Mississippi but they are consumed east of the Mississippi – and that in one year the wasted and bruised meat would have filled railroad box cars each to the capacity of 38,000 pounds and would have reached forty miles. I don't know whether you can picture that. Forty miles of box cars, each filled with 38,000 pounds of dying and bruised animals—waste meat.

There is a law that animals must be rested each 28 hours when shipped by rail. Today, most meat animals are transported live by truck. But there are no laws for trucks.

This summer I tried to get the license number of a truck filled with calves. I could see that there were some downers in it. The truck was traveling so fast and switching from lane to lane that it was impossible for me in a passenger car to catch up. Both the public and the meat industry should face the fact that if millions of pounds of wasted meat could be saved, food would sell at a lower price. But, as I have captioned many articles, the cruelty is worse than the waste.

It is painful to talk about the problems of transportation of laboratory animals – for it seems no one cares. No one but you—the humane-minded.

It is really ironic that we who are opposed to furnishing animals for research must do all in our power to facilitate the humane transportation of such animals to the laboratories. We have to do it. From the cats and kittens that are thrown about in sacks – to the crowded boxes and improvised crates with unwanted litters of puppies – and trucks of unwanted dogs, usually in compartments so crowded that if one dog stands on its hind feet he can find no place to put his front legs except on another dog. Often sexes are not divided; neither are small dogs separated from the large. And there is much fighting because dogs tend to blame other dogs nearby for their injury and distress and for being hungry or without water.

Although the petnapping law passed in 1966 has improved some trucking conditions for dogs, wardens and dealers in many areas

continue to truck and transport dogs in crowded, inhumane conditions.

The importation and transportation of monkeys for laboratories, I am told, has improved a little. Rough handling, the wrong food, not enough water still produce many deaths and, among pregnant monkeys, stillbirths. I could not describe to you the crowded cages of pregnant monkeys needed for experiments. An order is sent out for so many hundred pregnant monkeys which then must be caught and shipped. Protests to India and the Philippines seem to have helped the situation where once monkeys could not even sit upright and had to crouch in their own filth. Even in this past year, from East Africa, containers only 11 inches wide and 11 inches high contained three to four monkeys — 25 per cent were dead.

A friend of mine in India deplored the wholesale trapping programs and related to me that these small animals, weighing only a few pounds, even attack the trappers, trying to save numbers of their monkey colonies. She described their loyalty and kindness to each other and to their young. A large percentage of animals shipped for zoos die en route because ship or airline personnel do not understand the needs of animals.

I became aware of the tragedies of shipping dogs by air in the mid-forties. And when I became editor of *Popular Dogs*, I decided that an issue on transportation was important. I asked for records and incidents from readers. Suddenly I received hundreds of letters. It was then that I wrote all major airlines and the Railway Express Agency, suggesting rules and recommendations for worldwide transportation of purebred dogs. Not until I mentioned I had hundreds of letters and reports of tragedies and possible suits against the companies did airlines agree to meet with me. We met in New York and, for the first time, recommendations for shippers, airline personnel, and for consignees were agreed upon. I published these recommendations; that was in the mid-fifties. But I also published all the readers' letters of complaint. I thought I had to. After that, I presented the transportation issue every four years, trying to prod the airlines into doing something. For a while transportation seemed to improve.

Today, however, air and railroad travel, even for people, is so unpredictable that the shipment of animals is extremely bad. And, what is worse, the travel industry seems to take it for granted that animals can be treated like inanimate merchandise.

Although I am concerned with the shipping conditions for every live animal, my work and much of my investigation has been in purebred dogs. I learned that one large mail order house ships on approval, C.O.D. That means cash on delivery. Some people had seen a crate at an airport containing a dog, moaning in distress. The crate

was being returned to, imagine this, a post office box of a mail order house. The mail order house denied knowing about the dog and the crate was opened. A Doberman had been crammed in a 22 x 13 inch crate. The Doberman measured 37" x 23" at the shoulder. His paws were raw from scratching; he was ill; he had chorea; he had not been watered or exercised. He was destroyed humanely. The dog had been ordered by mail but the buyer didn't like his looks and so refused to pay the C.O.D. charge, and the dog was shipped all the way back. The airline should not have accepted the dog in such a crate, but this happens all the time. Neither should the veterinarian have issued a health certificate; evidently he issued the certificate without even seeing the dog. It's only one incident but it can be multiplied over and over again every week.

Another dog was shipped from the same mail order house in a crate that was nailed shut with no provision made to water or feed the dog. Although this dog had a health certificate attached to the crate, the veterinarian who examined the dog in New Jersey said it would have been impossible for the animal to have deteriorated so badly in the 8 days of shipment. Imagine, 8 days it had traveled. It left Nebraska supposedly in a healthy condition. Much is the fault of a shipper, of course.

I resigned as editor of *Popular Dogs* in 1967; after 18½ years I wanted to devote all my time to humane work. I became editor and consultant to a number of publications and this past April again wrote an article on shipping dogs by air — this time for *Dog World*. I visited the Animalport at the Kennedy Airport. The port is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. They receive all in-transit animals whose owners cannot meet them on arrival and animals being transferred with a stopover. They handled 878 dogs during December, 1968, and a total of 65,000 animals for the year. That's quite a number of animals. There were horses, crates of monkeys, and dogs, and everything imaginable—except maybe a giraffe—while I was there. The work of the Animalport at Kennedy Airport in preventing distress and relieving anxiety, hunger and suffering of animals is tremendous. This past August I also visited the Animalport in London, another very fine building.

After checking to see if any other airports provided such facilities and contacting many shippers, and even mail order houses, I sent my revised list of recommendations for shippers, for airline personnel, and consignees to all major airlines. Almost all of them answered; with the exception of maybe two or three, I got an immediate response.

All of the airlines explained to me why in transit there is no provision for personnel to get into these compartments. They said if an animal did become loose or if the air pressure failed, they couldn't possibly get into the cages to try to put oxygen masks on the

animals. You can see that there is a real definite problem there and, also, traveling by air the space of time is very, very short.

United said: Your recommendations are fine. Our compartments are pressurized and temperature controlled. Ground personnel are extremely mindful of safety. National said: Your list is quite complete. Eastern wrote a long letter but this is the gist of it: Personnel in our cargo department agree with your list. Our records show a total of 13,903 dogs shipped in one period, with revenue approximately \$266,000. All dogs except guide dogs must travel by crate. Delta said: Your recommendations cover all problems and we constantly remind our personnel that dogs need more ventilation. Mohawk: We have no additions due to the fairness of your list. KLM: Your lists are complete; the subject covered most fairly. Trans-World, Lufthansa, BOAC all agreed with no additions. PanAm said we have one suggestion: Please add that dogs should never be placed where they may be exposed to jet engine noise.

Regarding this last problem, I recently received a copy of a letter from an airline cargo handler: "I load and unload freight and baggage for a major airline. We handle dogs and cats that are kenneled for transportation. Most of these animals have never experienced anything like this before and they are petrified from the noise of the screaming jets and so much jostling around. Some animals try to chew through the kennels and they end up with broken teeth and bleeding mouths. Some even get loose. A veterinarian informed me that a tranquilizer pill is available. Please print this in all the papers and magazines to tell shippers to give animals and dogs tranquilizers."

Of particular concern to me is the REA (Railway Express Agency). I cannot say enough about the REA, and all of it is condemnation. Even if one ships by air, the animals must be trucked at either end, or both ends, of the trip. Crates of animals for laboratories may be trucked around all day before delivery or transfer to another airline. The REA is widely used by puppy mill breeders because they can send dogs, and even entire litters—two litters maybe to a crate—on a C.O.D. basis—cash on delivery. It is appalling that the REA continues to accept live animals on a C.O.D. basis. I don't know what we can do about that.

We have records of dogs being delivered and returned because the buyer changed his mind and did not like the looks of the dog or litter when it arrived. The REA even ships animals C.O.D. out of the country. That's unbelievable.

A breeder in South Carolina offers to ship dogs REA and C.O.D. anywhere in the United States. A woman wrote me (she wanted help): "The puppies arrived in an orange crate. Both were ill. At the express office the crate was in a wide drafty space. I rushed the puppies to the veterinarian. Both died." This woman, of

course, should never have ordered from a breeder who ships C.O.D. by Railway Express Agency.

I wish I knew the solutions to the problems in transportation—both for people and animals. Legislation is only a part of a solution. For with legislation there is a problem of enforcement. There is little legislation governing animal shipments; there is no federal legislation governing truck transportation outside of P.L. 89-544. Today 95% of livestock travels by truck and an attempt to pass humane legislation governing truckers was defeated by the trucking interests.

I save newspaper clippings of accidents involving animals. I would appreciate receiving all such stories for my files and my files are bulging. In one incident the driver escaped uninjured when his truck crashed with 105 calves. When police arrived, they found 40 of the calves had died, with many injured. I wondered: Was the driver going too fast? How many hours and how many miles had he driven without sleep? Why did he have an accident? I could cite hundreds of letters, reports, and tragedies that I have collected regarding animal transportation—tragedies of carelessness and indifference to animal suffering. But you all know of similar cases, probably worse.

The HSUS, I believe, could stimulate worldwide efforts to improve animal transportation by making the public aware of the way all animals are shipped. Every airport should have facilities for animals. In New York, the ASPCA has a fine building. In London, the Royal SPCA built an animal hostel in 1952. All large airports should provide a comfort station for animals. At smaller airports a nearby humane society or kennel could contract to provide board and exercise and food for animals held over a day or more. It seems inconsiderate that airlines accept animals and also make quite a bit of money on animal travel but so far airlines have not built a single accommodation for animals. So, it's up to the humane societies to consider how this is to be done. I don't think that we should have to be able to give all the money. I think some way, somehow, we must force the airlines and force the government to help. It's up to us to push it, but I don't think we should provide all the money.

Priority handling must be a must. Animals should be last on a plane and first taken off. I had 25 recommendations for shippers, for airline personnel, and for the consignees. Anyone who would like to receive a list of these could write me in care of The HSUS at our headquarters offices in Washington. I shall continue to work for legislation to this effect. There must be protection for all live animals, both domestic and wild, throughout the United States and the entire world, that it shall be an offense to convey or carry any animal or bird in such a manner as to cause the animal unnecessary suffering. I welcome suggestions and help from all humane-minded people.