

**THE WEALTH REPORT**
 Robert Frank looks at the lives and culture of the wealthy. [Blog Search:](#) 

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 November 6, 2007, 3:50 pm
**The Pet-Crazy Jet Set**

Why do the wealthy seem so crazy about their pets?

I doubt the rich love their dogs and cats any more than the rest of us. It's just that they have more money to indulge their pet fetishes. We all remember Leona and [her dog Trouble](#). (I wonder how Trouble is faring these days?) And then there's Paris Hilton's Chihuahua, Tinkerbell.

But it's not just spoiled heiresses who lavish all manner of luxuries on their pets. At [Butler Boot Camp](#), I learned there are two things that rich people care most about in their homes: their collections and their pets. These are both considered BYJ (Bet Your Job) categories, since a butler could lose his or her job by risking either one.

Now, according to a survey I just got from private-jet charter company [OneSky Jets](#), pets fly on about a quarter of the company's charters.

Even more startling: 15% of clients say flying pets privately is their No. 1 reason to charter.

The release says "regulars" who might be taking a ski trip to Aspen or heading for a winter vacation in Palm Beach would frequently fly their dogs in the next seat on the Gulfstream. One example, from the release, is a couple who flies their dogs between their homes in New York and North Dakota. One spouse flies with the two dogs about four times per year, at \$14,000 to \$15,000 per flight. And OneSky says it isn't unusual for a client to want their pet flown privately, unaccompanied by human passengers.

Why the interest in flying pets privately? The release cites all kinds of safety issues and restrictions by the airlines on pet transportation. Which may be the case. But would a passenger really decide to spend an extra \$10,000 to \$15,000 to fly to Florida just because of safety issues for their dog?

I doubt it. But then again, we should never underestimate what a rich person is willing to spend on their pet.

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If you are bringing in several million dollars a year and it is less hassle and safer, \$10k extra a trip for a few trips is just not a big deal.

The rich are far more cost insensitive

Comment by H - November 6, 2007 at [4:55 pm](#)

It only reflects how insane people can be about pets in this country. Of course, the rich have the means to be more conspicuous about it, but the devotion is the same. I love animals, but sometimes the adoration levels I see are wacky. Why can't we have a Society For the Prevention of Cruelty to Children?

Comment by Married Into the Pet Set - November 6, 2007 at [5:35 pm](#)

Travelling can be very traumatic for animals, and if I was a multi-

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millionaire/billionaire I would certainly be happy to fork out a few thousand a time to ensure that my pets were as happy and comfortable as possible. I don't see anything strange or eccentric about that (but then I do like animals better than I like most people lol)

Comment by Lara - November 7, 2007 at [4:18 am](#)

Between shareholders and tax deductions, the cost of flying the dogs can be minimal or nothing to the pet owner. Always "take a meeting" when you fly the Afghans.

Comment by Deductible - November 7, 2007 at [12:11 pm](#)

I have worked for the airlines and I can tell you that I have seen my share of pets lost or killed in transit.

I can remember opening the cargo door more than once and having a dog or cat come bounding out (luggage shifts during flight and can cause the cage doors to pop open). The dogs don't usually run too far but I have seen cats run for the hills (never to be seen again). I have also seen pets brain damaged from heat or frozen to death. Finally, I have seen the kennel show up empty with no explanation as to where the pet went.

Personally, I would never put a pet in an airline cargo hold (I'd drive).

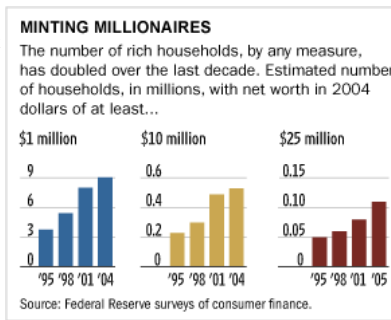
I can certainly understand why those with the means would consider their pet (s) as part or all of the justification for springing for a private jet.

Comment by Lost - November 8, 2007 at [1:49 pm](#)

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The Wealth Report is a daily blog focused on the lives and culture of the wealthy. The blog is written by Robert Frank, a senior writer for the Wall Street Journal and the author of "[Richistan: A Journey Through the American Wealth Boom and the Lives of the New Rich](#)," published in June. His column appears every Friday in The Wall Street Journal. Criticisms, comments and tips can be sent to: [wealth@wsj.com](mailto:wealth@wsj.com).

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