

## Field Guide Story

### Transporting Guns The Right Way

While most airlines policy on transporting firearms has not changed since the tragic events of September 11th, it is good idea to know how to properly travel with firearms, to avoid any delays and keep you on the right side of the law on your next hunting trip.

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Until September 11, most of us, often took for granted our privilege of flying with firearms. It's now obvious that those who will be flying to hunting destinations, with guns, are going to be drawing much more attention than usual.

As for myself, and many of my family members, we've had mixed experiences when checking our firearms with airlines. Most airline employees are well versed in procedures regarding the transportation of guns, but there are exceptions to everything. A statement from The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) web site states: "The FAA requires passengers carrying firearms in checked baggage to declare that firearm to the airline. Firearms must be unloaded, and in a lockable container suitable for air transportation and the bag checked in at the ticket counter. In addition, we recommend that you contact your airline to determine any airline specific requirements." While the statement doesn't specifically reference ammunition, but limited quantities generally are allowed in checked baggage.

Prior to flying there are some procedures hunters need to know before traveling with firearms. With the increased security at airports, it's important for hunters to remember that although traveling with a firearm has changed very

little in the past month, the process may take longer - so plan accordingly and allow plenty of extra time.

Jason Morrow, videographer for the National Wild Turkey Federation who travels thousands of miles each year said: "Traveling with a firearm can be relatively free and easy if you remember a few basic rules. The same regulations are still in place. I always take my gun apart before I go to the airport. This show the airport officials that the gun is unloaded and can't be easily used."

Morrow's two handy tips for flying with a firearm are: (1) Be sure you declare your firearm as soon as you check in at the airline desk; and (2) Keep your firearm in a locked, certified gun case separate from the rest of your luggage. Morrow says that as far as ammunition goes, he always purchases his when he arrives on site rather than worrying about traveling with an explosive product. "It's simply easier and faster not to travel with ammunition. "There are usually plenty of places to buy ammunition once you arrive on site, but if I have to take ammunition, I always pack it separately from my firearm in a different locked case." The FAA requires passengers carrying firearms in checked baggage to declare their firearms. When you arrive at the ticket counter you will be handed a small card to sign and date declaring the weapon is unloaded. Unless further inspection is requested, all you need to do is crack open the gun case and slip the card inside, then close and lock the case for air transportation as checked baggage. It is always prudent to contact officials with your airline in advance to determine if there are any additional requirements specifically mandated by that particular airline.





In contacting numerous airlines requesting information regarding air travel with guns, only American Airlines did not respond to our query. United, Southwest, Delta, and Continental spokespersons all responded that regulations for traveling with a firearm haven't changed since September 11, and recommended checking with the airline you intend to use for possible changes in regulations before booking a flight.

Although regulations for traveling with firearms hasn't changed, it will be well to remember that anyone traveling during the hunting seasons via an airline security regulations subject to change constantly and without notice. According to information provided by the airlines when checking a weapon, you need to take the following steps:

\*Declare to the airline representative that you are checking a weapon; (If there is a security checkpoint prior the ticket counter, you must declare the existence of a weapon to security personnel.

\*Present firearms unloaded and sign a "Firearms Unloaded" declaration

\*Lock the weapon in a hard-sided, crush-proof container and retain the key or combination (check out [cabelas.com](http://cabelas.com) complete selection of FAA approved cases.

\*Maintain entry permits in your possession for the country or countries of the destination or transit

\*Ensure small arms ammunition is packed separately from the firearm in the manufacturer's original package, or is securely packed in fiber, wood or metal

boxes.

\*Ammunition must be packed separately from your firearms. Check with individual airlines for their maximum weight allowed. Most airlines do not allow in excess of 11 lbs. per passenger, and all incendiary projectiles are prohibited.

\*One item of shooting equipment is accepted as part of a customer's free checked baggage allowance. For each item listed, one item of shooting equipment is defined as one or a combination of the following:

\*One rifle case containing: two or fewer rifles (with or without scopes)

\* one shooting mat

\* one small tool kit

\* noise suppressers.

Cases containing more than two rifles will be assessed an excess baggage charge.

One shotgun case containing:

two or fewer shotguns. Cases containing more than two shotguns will be assessed an excess baggage charge.

One pistol case containing:

two or fewer pistols

\* pistol telescopes

\* noise suppressers

\* a small pistol tool case.

Cases containing more than two pistols will be assessed an excess baggage charge.

Based on personal experience, Brian Sullivan, of NatureBent, Inc. offers the following tips on flying with firearms, "Put your gun in the case with the action open, facing up. Disassemble the gun if possible - It looks less threatening that way. Point out the empty chamber to the inspector, who may know nothing about guns. Keep the key to your gun case readily accessible. Some keys are small and easily lost. Keep a spare key in a safe place such as your wallet or carry-on luggage."

He continues, "Don't trust the locks on cheaper gun cases. Fasten a belt around the case - it's fast and secure."

He also added, "Look clean and professional at the airport. Leave the hunting duds in your luggage. On your return trip, don't show up with a week's worth of facial stubble."

With heightened airport security concerns, don't forget to ask whatever airline you intend to use specifically about rules and regulations for transporting firearms and ammunition, and to check in extra-early for your flight. If you will be hunting with an outfitter, contact them in advance for tips and suggestions on the forms and permits required.

If these tips and procedures are followed you should have no problems, on any destination your hunting may take you this season.

\*\* This Article is from Cabela's. To learn more or to purchase gun cases or hunting items, please visit their website at [www.cabelas.com](http://www.cabelas.com)