

The Puppy Search That Led Me to Europe

by Laureen Little

It's hard to remember that time, but around three years ago, we hadn't even heard of the Entlebucher Sennenhund. We weren't even a 'dog family', having survived the years of our young boys with as few constraints as possible outside of busy careers. Nelson Hercules v. Eagleheart came home just before Christmas in 2015, a loveable ball of mewing fur. We purchased Nelson on a breeding contract to give us the option of breeding at a later date. We operate a horse breeding ranch, so it didn't seem all that complicated.



The search for a suitable mate for Nelson quickly led me to Europe. Most of the dogs in North America have similar blood lines. If we were going to breed, we wanted to improve the DNA pool. Even in Europe, there are only a few breeders, and some didn't want to correspond with an 'English' from Canada. They like to watch their pups grow up and show locally. Finally, I found two favorable matches with breeders sympathetic to our goal of establishing a

breeding pair in Canada. Now we just had to hope for puppies.

In November, Jude la Cathare kennel in France announced the happy birth of eight pups including three females. Nelson had already been tested for hips, elbows, and knees as well as the PRA genetic test. Since he was a carrier, we needed a PRA-clear female. The female pups were soon DNA tested and we waited on results. Just before Christmas, I heard back that one of the three females was PRA-clear and saw the first photos of our puppy. Baby Nakita looked so sweet, with soft brown eyes and a long, white-tipped tail.

Our research on pet travel started in earnest. Entlebuchers at 8 weeks are ready to go to their new homes; that would be January 1st, 2018. What a happy way to start the new year! Here's what I learned.

- Pet passports are used widely in Europe and our French veterinarian was insistent that he could not produce this document without the rabies vaccine, which meant another

month to wait. Being determined, I learned the passport is not required for the U.S. or Canada. Our French vet then provided a Veterinary Certificate giving the results of a thorough health check, the ID chip number, and the first vaccination details, which sufficed.

- The departure country may have its own regulations about pet export, including required age and vaccination. France did not have any special requirements, but it is important to check with the Agriculture or Disease Control Agency in your country of purchase so that you are not turned away at check-in.
- Airlines allow most pets to travel in a carrier in the cabin if they are under 12 pounds. Contrary to what I was told, the agents at our check-in and boarding did not check the age of Nakita and turn us back for being under 16 weeks of age.
- Larger pets must go in cargo below the cabin in a secure crate. Space is limited to just a few pets in each category, so reserve ahead of time to get them on your flight.
- Generally, the cargo charge is about \$100 and carry-on is minimal. Ensure that your carrier or crate is approved by your airline and don't scrimp on cost or quality! Nakita was chewing the zipper tabs of her carrier before take-off and I was worried she would escape the bag before our trip concluded.
- Pack the following and carry it with you: a soft blanket, chew toys, a stuffed toy, something that smells like home (a T-shirt worn by the breeder and slept on by the dam), plenty of pee pads, a ticking clock to sound like 'mom', a water bottle and drinking cup, some kibble and treats, your passport, credit card, and the remainder of the purchase price. As I was coming over a weekend when the banks were closed, it needed to be in cash (Euros).
- To clear customs and enter either Canada or the U.S., the pet must be vaccinated against rabies. Rabies vaccine cannot safely be given before 12 weeks and then requires a three-week period to create good immunity. A 16-week old Entlebucher pup would be too big for carry on and yet very young for a long cargo flight. Some countries deemed to be Rabies Free are



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exempt from this rule and therefore allow pups to travel while still small. If you are not exempt, you must apply for a waiver to allow the young pup to cross without rabies vaccination. It is all possible, but it requires some research ahead of time.

- Ensure the purchase contract from the breeder is sufficient. This document should specify the breed, date of birth, and price paid. Our breeder provided our contract ahead of time so that I could study it (in French) and be ready to sign. We also received the official five-generation pedigree with our name and address already entered.
- You may want to research the expected duty for the imported pup. In Canada, it is generally the equivalent of our Goods and Services Tax, 5% of the total cost.

Our breeder was located at Saint-Ferriol, a very small village in the southwest corner of France, close to the Pyrenees and Spain. The closest airport was Toulouse, about a two-hour drive away. I booked a ticket from Calgary through Montreal and Paris to Toulouse, with the same return routing. Because of the rabies concern, I could not stop for connections anywhere between France and Canada. This created challenges on our return trip. Ours was a very long and exhausting trip with delays at every turn, lost luggage, dwindling kibble, extra overnight stays, and uncooperative airline agents. A sense of humour and calm perseverance saw us through.

Hopefully the problems we had will prevent the same thing from happening to you! Here are my tips.

- Allow a minimum of two hours for each flight connection, and significantly more if you have to change airports. Many cities have more than one airport, so be very careful about your departure and arrival information on connections.
- Keep all your puppy supplies with you at all times. You can check your own bag, but don't lose sight of kibble and pee pads! Customs may confiscate any open kibble. Try to have a small, sealed bag along. If you have to change kibble, try to keep the main protein source the same and minimize other ingredients.
- If possible, book the entire trip through a single airline. If you must use two separate carriers, book through a travel agent to provide you some protection in case of delays.
- Be prepared for delayed flights, lost luggage, and general travel nightmares. Have funds with you for snacks and something to read or keep yourself and your pup amused. If you are delayed overnight, ask the flight attendants for hotel

suggestions—they know the close, reasonably priced, safe places to stay.

- If you end up staying overnight, stay calm and peaceful. Remember your pup relies on you when there is a threat. If you are upset or anxious, she soon will also be upset. And you don't want an upset puppy while travelling.
- Ask the hotel desk about take-out options nearby. You can leave your pup briefly or just carry him along in the carrier for a little fresh air.
- Handicapped or family rest rooms are perfect for puppy breaks. They generally have an easy-to-clean floor, lots of towels and soap, and a private space that is clean and free of dog diseases. You may find the toilets to be almost on the floor—suitable for little tots, but not for you!
- Some airline agents are interested in and sympathetic to your puppy. Many are not at all interested and will insist that the carrier remain completely closed for the duration of the trip. The onboard rest room space maybe very small but there is just enough room to put the pup on the floor to pee. It gives the puppy a little break from the carrier, which they need every couple hours. You can clean up thoroughly and the agents will never know the pup was out.



When we finally arrived back in Calgary, Ian and Nelson were very happy to see us. Nakita and I both slept the next couple of days away. Nelson needed some one-on-one time to relax into his new role and know that he was still my 'special dog'. Nakita snuggled up with Ian, smiles on both of their faces. She and Nelson began to play and fight together under supervision. The growls and squeaks coming from such a small package were surprising for all of us. At first, Nakita wasn't very keen about the snow

and cold, but within a few days, she delighted in following Nelson through the drifts, jumping and barking all the way.

As some of you know, we like to spend most of the winter in Arizona and so another flight loomed in our future. I called ahead and booked Nakita as carry-on and Nelson as cargo. When I made our plans, I thoroughly



researched how to bring a new pup back to Canada or the U.S. What I neglected to check was bringing a young pup from Canada to the U.S. Looking back, this was the difficult part. Regulations often make no sense to me! Fortunately, our local vet was able to steer us to the required paperwork. We needed

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new health certificates for both dogs within ten days of travel and then we needed to apply to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for a waiver to bring an unvaccinated pup from Canada into the U.S. (Canada is not a Rabies Free country). The waiver application was all online and I had it approved and in-hand within a couple days. Next, we were off to the Calgary offices with an appointment to get another permit stamped in person. It was actually quite easy, thanks to our vet! It would have taken me a long time reading online to figure out the various steps.

Our early morning flight from Calgary was a juggle of bags and dogs and fatigue, but we made it. Ian collected us in Phoenix and we headed north to Cottonwood. In the time since we arrived, everyone has settled into the new arrangements. Nakita looks out for her big buddy Nelson and walks by his shoulder wherever he goes. She's getting better at house training, although her abilities fade in the evening. We are enjoying our dogs and the ability to just leave the door open for potty time, anytime! It is so much easier than the ordeal of -30F weather. The local specialty pet store found the Duck & Pear kibble we like and delivered it to our door for our arrival. Our Arizona vet is a true dog-lover and we had Nakita in for her deworming and second set of shots last week. She seems to have picked up Giardia somewhere in our travels, so she's on Panacur for a week to clear this up.

At this moment, both dogs are taking their mid-morning snooze, fresh air blowing in the door on them, just out of the direct sun, warm and cozy on their blankets. Nakita has her 'dork ear' on display. In France, they call this 'semi-sport' while



Sport Mode

the 'double-dork' is 'sport mode'! Nakita is learning about the horses and they are taking notice of her. We have great fun in the garden, playing and chasing. Nakita torments Nelson, jumping on his head, biting at his ears or tail to get his attention. Nelson plays gently until he's had enough and then gives a gruff growl. Nakita retreats to hide under a chair with her chewy toy for a rest. And then it all repeats again.

This is what life is all about. Life with Entles.

References

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Travel within Europe

- https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/pet-travel/by-country/eu/pet_travel-european_union_pet_passports
- https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/pet-movement_en

Importing to USA

- <https://www.cdc.gov/importation/traveling-with-pets.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/importation/rabies-free-countries.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/importation/pdf/Unimmunized-Dog-Permit-Application.pdf>

Importing to Canada

- http://www.inspection.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-animals-animaux/WORKAREA/DAM-animals-animaux/text-texte/terr_anima_export_certif_pets_internat_bilingual_1396373316023_eng.pdf