



WARNING

COMPANY: Airlink Aviation	DATE: 24 August 2026
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1. IATA LIVE ANIMALS REGULATIONS – 2026 REQUIREMENTS

The current IATA Live Animals Regulations (LAR), Edition 52, January 2026, contain specific requirements for domestic cats and dogs and for the acceptance and handling of live animals. IATA states that the LAR is applied throughout the live-animal transport process, including acceptance, handling and loading. *These standards are referenced below as the applicable industry requirements against which the conduct in this incident is assessed.*

1.1 Container Requirement 1 – domestic cats

The January 2026 IATA Container Requirement 1 applies to domestic cats. It requires the animal container to be suitable for the animal, including appropriate construction, ventilation, safety and handling characteristics. The container must be designed so that accidental opening does not occur and so that it is safe for the animal and handlers.

IATA further requires that the internal dimensions be sufficient for the animal to sit, stand, turn around and lie down naturally. The minimum internal dimensions are calculated from the individual animal measurements: length = $A + \frac{1}{2}B$; width = $C \times 2$; and height = $D + \text{bedding}$. The dimensions relate to the largest animal in the container.

The footage indicating that the carrier door had come off and could not readily be refitted securely raises a direct concern regarding the requirement that the container be escape-proof and designed to prevent accidental opening. Acceptance of the cat after the carrier had been rendered insecure is therefore a serious apparent departure from the IATA container requirements.

1.2 IATA Excess Baggage Live Animal Acceptance Checklist

For a cat travelling in the aircraft hold as excess baggage/AVIH, IATA provides an Excess Baggage Live Animal Acceptance Checklist. The published checklist requires the following matters to be checked before acceptance:

- Flight information, including flight details, ticket/PNR, date, origin and destination.
- Owner/shipper identification and a 24-hour contact number.
- Confirmation of the species and the necessary documentation.

- Confirmation that the animal is clean and appears fit to travel.
- Confirmation that the animal is not sedated and that required age documentation is available.
- Container compliance, including suitable size, sufficient ventilation, adequate construction, appropriate handholds/lifting devices, leak-proof and escape-proof construction, cleanliness, absorbent material, and suitable feeding/watering facilities where applicable.
- Correct container labelling, including consignee information and “Live Animals” / “This Way Up” markings.
- Appropriate feeding/watering arrangements where required.
- Completion of the checklist, including comments, date, printed name and signatures of the acceptance agent.

Critical requirement: The IATA Excess Baggage Live Animal Acceptance Checklist expressly states: “IF ANY QUESTION IS ANSWERED WITH ‘NO’, DO NOT ACCEPT THE SHIPMENT.”

IATA also states that the operator must retain a copy of the In-Cabin Live Animal Acceptance Checklist for audit purposes and to demonstrate compliance in the event of incidents, and that acceptance and live-animal handling personnel must be appropriately trained. For the incident under investigation, the applicable checklist depends on whether the cat was being transported in-cabin (PETC) or in the hold as excess baggage (AVIH). The airline and ground handler must therefore identify the transport classification and produce the corresponding acceptance documentation.

1.3 Handling, secure custody and loading

IATA guidance states that live animals must be moved and housed safely, that their containers must be secured during loading, and that precautions must be taken to prevent movement or tipping. IATA also states that only appropriately trained and competent personnel should handle live animals and that the captain must be advised of live-animal cargo, including species, location and quantity, through the Notification to Captain (NOTOC) process once loaded.

The disappearance of the cat after it entered the baggage-handling stream raises serious questions regarding the continuity of custody, identification of the animal as live cargo, secure staging, transfer between staff/areas, and confirmation that the animal was actually loaded onto the aircraft. These records must be preserved and produced.

2. ANIMALS PROTECTION ACT 71 OF 1962

The Animals Protection Act 71 of 1962 defines “animal” to include a cat and defines “owner” broadly to include a person having possession, charge, custody or control of the animal. The Act therefore provides a relevant legal framework for assessing the conduct of persons who have custody or control of a live animal during transport.

- **Section 2(1)(a):** Prohibits, among other conduct, neglect and terrifying an animal.

On the facts presently available, the SPCA considers that the apparent negligent handling of an unsecured carrier, together with the subsequent loss of the cat while under airport/handling custody, constitutes direct contravention of section 2(1)(a) of the Act.

3. FORMAL WARNING

Airlink Aviation are hereby formally warned that the handling of live animals at Cape Town International Airport must be conducted in a manner that protects the animal from escape, injury, distress and

unnecessary suffering, and must comply with the applicable IATA LAR requirements, airline procedures and South African animal welfare law.

The circumstances surrounding the cat's disappearance on 19 July 2026 are unacceptable. In particular, the apparent continuation of handling after the carrier door had become detached or insecure represents a serious safety and animal-welfare concern. A live animal must not be placed into a container known to be insecure and then released into a baggage-handling environment without effective containment and continuous control.

4. NOTICE TO COMPLY AND REQUIRED ACTIONS

Airlink Aviation are required to take the following corrective actions and provide the SPCA with written confirmation and supporting evidence:

1. Produce the completed IATA Excess Baggage Live Animal Acceptance Checklist for the cat, or the applicable In-Cabin Live Animal Acceptance Checklist if the cat was classified as PETC. If no checklist exists, provide a written explanation for its absence.
2. Provide evidence of the IATA live-animal training and competency records of the personnel involved in accepting, scanning, handling, staging and loading the cat.
3. Immediately review and strengthen procedures to ensure that any live-animal carrier that is damaged, insecure, defective, or not escape-proof is not accepted or released into the baggage stream until the defect has been rectified or an appropriate compliant container is provided.
4. Implement or confirm a formal live-animal custody/hand-over process so that responsibility for the animal is identifiable at every transfer point from check-in to aircraft loading.
5. Provide written confirmation of the corrective measures implemented to prevent recurrence.

5. CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE

Failure to provide the requested information, failure to preserve evidence, or recurrence of unsafe live-animal handling may result in further action by the SPCA, including referral to the appropriate regulatory, airport, law-enforcement or prosecutorial authorities, and/or consideration of proceedings under applicable animal-welfare legislation.

6. RESPONSE REQUIRED

A written response addressing each issue above, together with the requested supporting documentation, must be submitted to the SPCA Inspectorate within 7 calendar days of receipt of this notice, unless a different period is agreed in writing.