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Paws Up for Pets: PBIA pet relief patches: Flying hounds can now head for the head

Posted by [Chris Felker](#) on September 30, 2015 at 10:30am

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Three-year-old Yorkshire terrier Peaches, who has been named America's Top Dog Model, poses in a pet relief area at Palm Beach International Airport.



Peaches no doubt will make regular use of PBIA's new pet relief areas, at the eastern and western ends of the airport.

Photos by Taylor Jones/The Coastal Star

By Arden Moore

In Palm Beach County, October signifies the start of steady balmy breezes and the return of a steady stream of snowbirds from the East and Midwest states. Some of our temporary residents will land at Palm Beach International Airport with lots of suitcases and, of course, their beloved family dog or cat.

Traveling with pets is a trend that continues to escalate all across the country. In fact, the number of people who bring their dogs (and cats) along on road trips as well as on airplanes has nearly doubled in the past decade, according to a recent pet owners survey conducted by the American Pet Products Association.

Fortunately for furry frequent fliers, arriving and departing Palm Beach International Airport just got a bit easier — especially on their bladders. That's because PBIA, recognizing the need to cater to canines, recently created not one, but two well-manicured, fenced-in pet relief areas.

Snicker if you will, but access to a bathroom especially after a long flight is a priority among people and pets, particularly if they have incurred a turbulent flight.

Having once flown Chipper, my 60-pound Husky-golden retriever mix, from San Diego to New York City for a media event, I can attest to the benefits of having an easy-to-find pet relief area at an airport.

"The response by the public to the opening of our pet relief areas has been great," says Lacy Lueck, director of airport marketing. "There are signs inside the terminals directing people to the pet relief areas and our staff is ready to provide directions once you and your pet deplane."

Specifically, the pet relief areas are located at the east and west ends of the main terminal, outdoors on Level One (baggage claim level). And, in true PBC fashion, these are being heralded as "luxury" canine potty places. Each features a comfy grass and wood-chip area fenced in for safety with plenty of shade. And, of course, each offers complimentary doggy waste disposal bags.

Keep in mind that PBIA is ranked the sixth-best airport in the United States, according to Condé Nast Traveler. It has a putting green installed for golf lovers, and now recognizes the value of making companion animals feel welcome.

"I think this is a fabulous idea," declares Jo Jo Harder, chief executive officer of Jo Jo Companies and creator of America's Top Dog Model contest, who shares her Boca Raton home with her dog, Romeo. "Well-manicured pet travelers should have well-manicured pet relief areas where they can take care of business in style, as well as romp and roll. We wouldn't want them to ruin their 'petitures,' would we?"

To capture this canine amenity in Palm Beach County style, we turned to a local canine celebrity — Peaches, a Yorkshire terrier and the reigning America's Top Dog Model for 2015.

Peaches knows Fido fashion and is one well-mannered dog. She and her pet parent, Claire Spielman of suburban Lake Worth, graciously accommodated The Coastal Star's request for a photo shoot at the PBIA pet relief area.

Her Facebook page (Yorkie Peachy Girl) has more than 1,740 followers. On her page, I discovered that Peaches, a tad over 6 pounds, appears to have a larger clothes closet than I do and her fashion tastes are far superior to mine.

But Peaches is more than a beautiful-looking, strike-the-pose Yorkie. She also is a certified therapy dog (acing the Share-A-Pet therapy training program) who delights in visiting kids regularly at the Palm Beach Children's Hospital at St. Mary's Medical Center in West Palm Beach.

"Peaches enjoys doggie modeling and loves getting dressed up, but she truly loves bringing joy to children at the hospital," Spielman says. "When we put on her little therapy vest, she gets excited because she knows it is time to visit the kids."

Peaches, now 3, has logged many road miles in her dual roles as a therapy dog and America's Top Dog Model, but has yet to earn her airplane wings. That is expected to happen next year when Spielman and her husband, Bob, plan to fly to the vacation destination of Lake Tahoe in California with Peaches inside an airline-approved carrier.

And, Spielman makes this prediction to those traveling in the cabin on that future flight out of PBIA: "Peaches will be better behaved than any child on that airplane. That, I can guarantee. Yes, she is a girly girl, but she is very quiet and very well-mannered."

Do you fly with your pets? Have you flown in and out of PBIA with your pet? Please share your best travel tale (and provide photos, too!). Send to arden@fourleggedlife.com.

Arden Moore, founder of www.FourLeggedLife.com, is an animal behavior consultant, editor, author, professional speaker and master certified pet first aid instructor. Each week, she hosts the popular Oh Behave! show on Pet Life Radio.com. Learn more by visiting www.fourleggedlife.com.