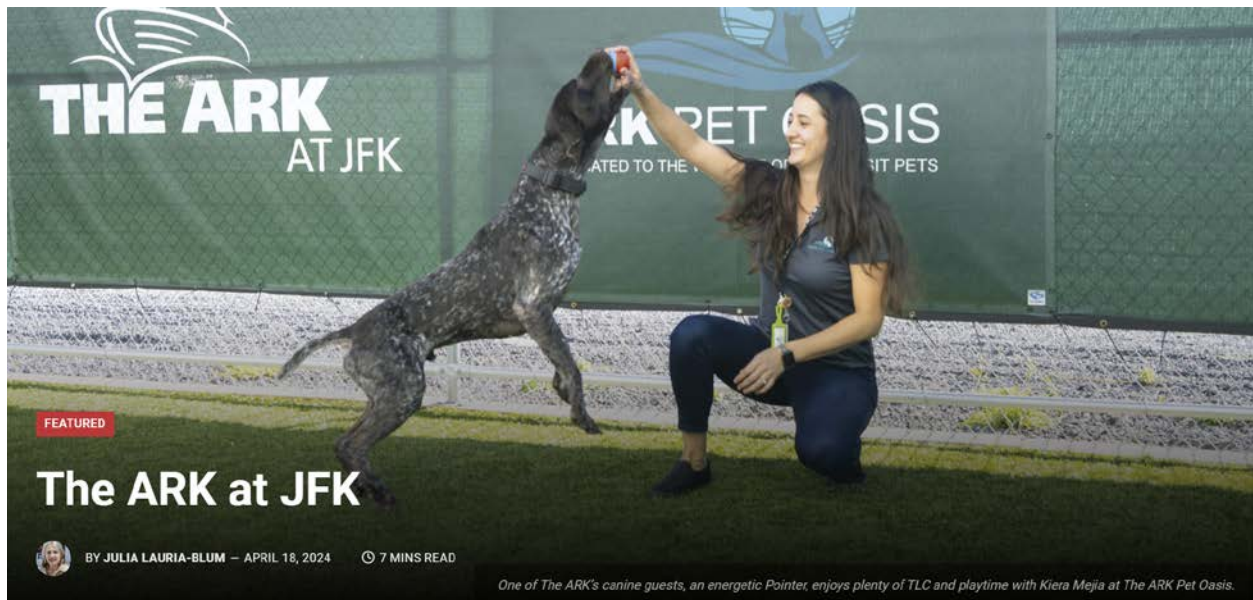




Setting the Gold Standard in Animal Handling and Transportation

The ARK at JFK is a comprehensive, multi-purpose animal airport handling and cargo facility and quarantine center at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) that provides pre and post-travel animal care and veterinary services for horses, pets, in-transit companion animals, birds, and livestock. The ARK is committed to the safe, humane treatment of all animals traveling by air, ensuring an efficient, safe, secure, and low-stress environment for both human and animal clients.

John J. Cuticelli, Jr., Founder and Chairman of ARK Development, LLC, has led a world-class team of veterinarians, bio-chemists, architects, engineers, and other professionals in the planning and construction of The ARK's state-of-the-art facility, which is located off the runway at JFK in Cargo Area D. **Elizabeth A. Schuette** is President and CEO of the ARK Import Export Center and oversees all day-to-day operations of its animal health, reception, and quarantine center.



With only a few ports within the United States through which horses can be imported and exported, the founding and opening of The ARK was primarily set in motion as an import and export equine facility. This specialty USDA-approved equine import and quarantine center is the first of its kind in the United States.

During its development, Dr. Linda Mittel of Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine worked with The ARK to design the facility, helping to create its cleaning and disinfection protocols so that stalls and kennels were constructed in ways that allow for optimal cleaning and disinfection through biosecurity.

The ARK officially open its doors on January 2, 2017, and has served the JFK Airport community since then. It is the world's first privately owned 24/7 animal reception center and full-service transportation center for the import and export of animals, with direct access to the airside ensuring the smooth transition for all animals arriving or departing on international flights at JFK Airport.

Approved by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey Board, The ARK at JFK is North America's only cargo terminal dedicated to animals. It encompasses 178,000 square feet and has over 14 acres of land surrounding the ground area. It offers airside and landside services to board, kennel, quarantine, import, export, and transport large and small animals. The facility includes 45 dog kennels, 12 cat kennels, a horse export barn and main import barn, a veterinarian clinic, and more.



Kiera Mejia, Director of Sales and Marketing at ARK Import/Export Center, and **Alyssa Burke**, Director of Operations & Logistics, recently spoke to *Metropolitan Airport News* about The ARK's daily operations and services.

"There are different divisions within The ARK at JFK," explained Ms. Mejia, "The ARK's facility and business as a whole operation includes equine import/export operations, and The ARK Pet Oasis, which is the kennel for small animals, such as dogs, cats, and other types of mammals."

There is also a pet shipping division called Noah's Pet Transport at The ARK at JFK. "That is a separate division and service for us to make all the arrangements related to pet transportation. We will book flights, provide ground transportation to and from a person's home, customs clearance, destination services, health documentation... basically anything a pet would need to travel to or from the United States," said Mejia.

Equine Care & Quarantine

The international import and export of horses through JFK requires that all horses travel through The ARK. Equine- and livestock-related documentation is handled by a handful of brokers (outside of The ARK) specializing in that area. The ARK has an on-site quarantine facility for equine import where horses can complete their three-day minimum quarantine (or more, depending on where they originated from and their physical condition and vaccination records). Direct walk-off loading from jet stalls into quarantine is performed by specially designed ARK vehicles, and their care begins immediately upon arrival with 24/7 observation by highly trained, experienced, and caring staff.



The equine import barn has 48 individual climate-controlled stalls with non-slip flooring and epoxy-covered walls, natural lighting to accommodate circadian rhythm, 100% air exchange, and negative pressure transfer to prevent re-circulation. The horses receive two daily feedings of high-quality hay and special hay upon request. An ante-room holds each horse's equipment and supplies, and daily grooming and hand walking are available upon request. Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine provides biosecurity oversight.

For equine export, the horses must spend a minimum of 3-4 hours in one of the two dozen export stalls to allow sufficient rest between travel time from wherever they may have been transported. This also enables the USDA to assess the horses before their departure, to ensure that their microchips match what is on their documentation, and to ensure that the horses appear healthy and not overly stressed or in need of any veterinarian care or attention. "The horses then can exit our facility directly rampside, and we will put the jet stalls right up to the ramp, and the horses will walk directly onto them," said Kiera Mejia. [ASAK Solutions](#), a separate team and company used for ground operations, transports the horses directly to the plane.

Exotic animals are transported mostly from zoo to zoo. The ARK does not physically handle non-domesticated animals, but it provides a safe haven for them in a temperature-controlled facility. The ARK can refill food and water in crates that must be constructed as per IATA regulations; hence, there is always a way to refill food and water without opening the crate.

The ARK Pet Oasis



Air travel can be stressful for pets and pet parents. Pets transported as cargo and excess baggage may spend hours pre- and post-flight confined in their transport crates or sitting in cargo warehouses without food, water, or relief. The ARK Pet Oasis seeks to alleviate a pet's anxiety and a pet parent's concerns by ensuring that all traveling animals receive rest and care upon arrival, departure, and between domestic and international flights.

If traveling on the same airplane as a pet, The ARK's complete import services include picking up the animal from the cargo facility or directly from the aircraft, customs clearance, and post-flight care, which takes approximately four hours before the traveler collects their pet, assuming that the animal is not coming in from a country with a high risk for rabies or other disease.

While it is required for all horses to travel through The ARK, it is not required for airlines to utilize The ARK's services for dogs, cats, and other companion animals; however, animals are not able to remain in the airline's cargo area for more than four hours, so at some point, it is required for the airlines to use The ARK as a resource.

The ARK provides short-term care for companion animals traveling on alternate flights as their parents and supports airlines when flights are delayed or canceled. When this is the case, The ARK's goal is to limit the time the animals have to stay in the warehouse, "We try to provide transportation to and from the aircraft whenever possible," said Mejia. "This may present as a hurdle at times, as many airlines already have contracts with ground handlers outside of The ARK."

Advancing the Welfare of Traveling Animals

"The ARK is a center for animal welfare and care at JFK Airport, creating a standard that all airports can benefit from...so it just takes team effort and an appeal to ground handlers to help this all to work," said Kiera Mejia, "The ARK is the only facility like this on airport property, privately owned and different than other facilities in the United States, or even around the world. We are very unique."

As JFK International Airport is a huge and popular port of entry in the United States, many animal rescue organizations use the airport, and The ARK works with them, primarily for international arrivals. As recently as this past March, 69 rescued dogs from the West Bank, mostly abandoned, feral, and injured, arrived at The ARK in support of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals International. [Visit the SPCA website to read the full story,](https://metroairportnews.com/ark-at-jfk/)

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