

Behind the Scenes Inside The ARK, JFK Airport's New Pet Terminal

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With [JFK Airport](#)'s new \$65 million pet terminal, [The ARK](#), our furry friends and live animal cargo can now travel in luxury (and safety). The ARK is considered to be the world's first privately owned, 24-hour animal terminal and airport quarantine center. Located in Cargo Building 78 in area D, in a facility shared by Air France, Alitalia and KLM, the 88,000 square foot pet terminal took two years for design and construction, replacing an existing pet facility from 1951 that was in a state of major disrepair. It is located on 14.5 acres of land, one of the largest plots at the airport, and developed in response to an RFI by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. We recently had the opportunity to tour the new facility, which is currently in the first phase of opening.



The ARK currently contains a Pet Oasis, an Equine & Livestock Export Center and an Aviary In-Transit Quarantine. Still under construction is the full-service ARK Import-Export Center featuring Equine Quarantine/Import, Grooms' Lounge and The ARK Aviary. A final phase, to be operated by sub-tenants will include a full veterinary clinic, a veterinary blood laboratory, and pet boarding and grooming facility.



Looking at the contrast between the increasingly upscale offerings in the human terminals, John J. Cuticelli, Jr. CEO, Racebrook and Founder and Chairman of ARK Development/The ARK at JFK, tells us, “Animals were never given that luxury. All we wanted to do was to create a facility to promote the safe and human treatment of animals pre and post flight.” To that end, the ARK team traveled all around the world to look at best practices in the transportation of live animals.



“What you’ll see here today is what we believe is the composite best elements that the world has to offer for the traveling animal.” Usually, animals are transported on cargo transports –

trolleys or pickup trucks – but The ARK uses a climate controlled van so that the animals do not need to be sitting in extreme temperatures as they await loading into an aircraft. Opera plays over the sound system in the equine departures facility because Cuticelli believes the music has a calming effect on the horses. The 24 large resting stalls were made by a manufacturer in Kentucky and outside there is a 20,000 square foot turnout area for the horses.



Here's a look at the canine, feline and equine residents who were on hand on our visit:





Messina stays at the facility full time and is used to train the other horses



A cat getting groomed



Harry is a military animal that just returned from Iraq, and is en route to Virginia



The Pet Oasis is within the jurisdiction of U.S. Customs and The ARK ensures that the animal has all the necessary documents and handles the customs clearing process. Like humans, until the animal clears customs, it isn't technically on United States territory.

The ARK has the capability to handle cargo planes unloading directly at the facility doors, though that has not taken place yet:



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