

Cat stranded on plane for 12 days found alive

NEW YORK (Reuter) Tabitha the cat, stranded aboard a Tower Air 747 for 12 days, was found alive Tuesday after her owner filed suit demanding that the airline ground the jet for an expensive all-out search.

Tabitha's owner, Carol Ann Timmel, said her pet escaped from a kennel in the cargo hold of a New York-to-Los Angeles flight June 30.

Airline officials calculate the long-lost feline has since logged 48,280 km.

Timmel, 20 — an actress who had just moved to Los Angeles from New York — vowed to keep the pressure on as long as it took to find Tabitha.

Joined by a cat psychic and an animal rescuer, Timmel found a thinner but healthy Tabitha behind a panel below the passenger cabin.

"I opened the panel and there she was on a piece of insulation. She put a paw in my hand. I picked her up," Timmel told a news conference at a Manhattan animal hospital where Tabitha was taken for an examination.

"Tabitha was found in the exact location the psychic pinpointed," she said.

The 3-year-old tabby had lost 0.9 kg of her 3.6 kg but was otherwise in good health, veterinarian Keith Manning said.

"I don't think she's going to have a fear of flying," he

said.

Tower Air had undertaken numerous searches but failed to find Tabitha. Timmel filed suit in New York state court Monday saying the searches were "sporadic."

"Tabitha is approximately the size of two teacups and the plane is approximately the size of a football field," the exasperated owner told reporters Monday.

The plane was grounded at midnight Monday and Tabitha was found about nine hours later, an airline spokeswoman said.

She said that while the expense of the grounding was not available, "it was very costly to say the least."

The airline said Tabitha is eligible for frequent flier miles, but she's been grounded by Timmel.

Pet and owner will be taken back to California first class at no cost with Tabitha in the cabin this time. Timmel said that would be Tabitha's last flight.

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