

Labor of Love: Shipping Valentine's Day Flowers is a Delicate Affair

(NAPSA)—For many people, nothing says romance like fresh roses. So, for the most romantic day of the year, roses are shipped to the United States by the ton. Who ships them and how do they get your beloved only the freshest ones? The process might surprise you.

Because a shipment of flowers may cover great distances, each step must be carefully synchronized to ensure that the fragile cargo stays in top shape. Many Valentine's Day roses come from South America. Starting in the hills of such countries as Colombia and Ecuador, the roses are grown and cut on large farms. From there, the stems are packed according to size and color and transported to the closest regional airport to be loaded onto temperature-controlled aircraft.

"To keep roses fresh, we must make sure they stay between 34 and 45 degrees Fahrenheit at all times," said Tom O'Malley, vice president, UPS Air Cargo Latin America. "But timing is just as critical as temperature. We have to make sure the flowers arrive in the United States less than 24 hours after they were picked at the farm."

From January 20 through Valentine's Day, UPS, the largest express and cargo carrier in Latin America, expects to carry more than seven million pounds of flowers worldwide. To meet the seasonal rush, UPS adds extra flights from Latin America.

Before Valentine's Day roses can reach their final destinations, they must clear customs and U.S. Department of Agriculture inspec-



FOR YOU—A fresh rose by any name smells especially sweet.

tions. An estimated 85 percent of all flowers entering the United States go through Miami International Airport due to its close proximity to Latin America. UPS is the top cargo carrier at Miami International where it has its own freight hub to help streamline the clearance process. The company works with U.S. Customs officials to ensure Valentine's Day roses clear inspections and the flowers are kept cool the entire time in UPS refrigerated warehouses.

After the flowers pass inspections, UPS sorts them according to their final destinations. The company ships them to countries like Japan and Germany, to U.S. florists, and directly to the homes of loved ones across the United States.

"When it comes to delivering fresh roses, transportation can be a thorny issue," said Hilda Varela, vice president of Associated Farms. "But luckily for us, we picked the right partner in UPS. We know we can always rely on them to make our customers happy."

So next time you see a brown delivery truck, it just might be headed your way with a bundle of fresh, red roses.