



Traveling With Your Pet

By Brenda F. Barnette, CEO

Going on vacation? Your companion animal can be a great travel companion on a trip. Preparing to move? Your furry friend will acclimate to a new home if he is with you. You will need to do some planning ahead to make it a safe journey for you and your four legged family members.

Buckle up for safety is the first step for everyone in your car, and this includes your animal passengers. I prefer traveling with my dogs and cats in the heavy duty plastic carriers which can be purchased in various sizes at most pet stores. I prefer the plastic to the wire crates for safety. It is too easy to get a foot or toe stuck in a wire crate causing injury and pain. Carriers provide security and should always be buckled with the seat belt or a specially designed carrier restraint. Select a crate that allows your dog or cat to stand up and turn around but one that is not too big. Too much space inside a crate can lead to injury during sudden stops or accidents. Put a towel inside for a comfy cushion.

If car travel is new for your companion, take him or her for a few short rides to the park or around town before the trip. This will help your dog or cat become comfortable with auto travel. These practice runs will help you to determine if you will be traveling with a road warrior or a white-knuckle flyer.

Food, Water and Exercise: If your dog isn't accustomed to car travel, do not feed him for 6 – 7 hours before the ride. Stick with your regular diet, giving his main meal at the end of the day's road trip. Dry food is more convenient, if your pet is used to it. There are several types of clip-on water holders that can be attached inside of the carriers.

Cats will need a litter box in their carrier. Use only a small amount of litter – she just needs to get the scratching sensation.

When you need to stop you can walk the dog. You and your dog will know how often this needs to be. My older dog, Nota, who is 18-21 years-old, needs to stop every two hours. I have other dogs who could easily wait 4 or more hours.

Certification and Identification: Carry proof your dog or cat is current on all vaccinations, including rabies. If traveling over state lines, you will need a health certificate from your veterinarian issued within 10 days of traveling. Make sure your dog or cat is micro chipped and has current ID tags with a telephone number where you can be reached - maybe your cell number - secured to his collar. Also carry a photo of your pet to help others identify the animal if he gets lost.

Other Helpful Hints:

- Pack your pet's leash (a leash or harness for cats), food and water bowls, favorite toys, a piece of bedding from home and any medication your furry family member requires.
- NEVER let your pet's head extend outside the car window. Particles of dirt can penetrate the eyes, ears and nose, causing injury or infections. Excess cold air in the lungs can also cause illness.
- Be sure to always park your car in a shaded area to keep the car cool. NEVER leave your pet alone inside a car, even for a few minutes. Find restaurants with drive-through windows or bring someone with you on the trip to take meal shifts so your furry family member can stay in your air-conditioned car.
- Plan ahead where to stop and where to stay. Information on pet-friendly establishments can easily be found in bookstores or online at sites like www.petswelcome.com. Call ahead to confirm their pet policy. Getting your dog or cat ready for travel will be rewarded with many memorable adventures and fun days on the road together.