

Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

Golden Rule Training

Rover goes for a ride

Dogs and Car Safety

Does your dog love to go for a car ride? Maybe he rides shotgun, sits in your lap, or maybe he loves to hang his head out the rear window with the breeze in his face. Perhaps he just sacks out in the back and sleeps. If that describes your dog, you and your dog are in avoidable danger.

A loose dog is not a good idea for many reasons. They can interfere with your driving (maybe they want to drive); they can be distracting as they move all over the car. If there is an accident and if the dog is seated in the front passenger seat he may be killed by the airbag as it inflates. An injured or scared dog that's loose may interfere with emergency personnel, or even bite them out of fear. Scared dogs can become disoriented and could survive the crash, but be hit by a passing car, just to name a few scenarios.

In addition, according to the American Automobile Association (AAA), unrestrained pets cause more than 30,000 accidents annually, and the Travel Industry Association of America says 29 million Americans have traveled with a pet on a trip of 50 miles or more in the past five years. Per Barkbuckleup.com, a 60-lb dog traveling at 35 mph can turn into a 2,700 pound projectile in an accident. For the safety of your pet and your family, look for a harness that lets your pet sit or lie down, but will keep them restrained in an accident. With those statistics, it would be prudent to make sure you and your pets are safe.

That said there are many affordable and safe restraints available now for all pets; such as wire crates, soft crates, seatbelt harnesses, car barriers, car seats (yes car seats)! There are also products made by car manufacturers for specific cars, SUV's, vans, etc. If you love your pet, it's worth checking out!

Safety Do's and Don'ts

Do:

Exercise your dog prior to a long trip A tired dog will be less anxious and nervous due to the stabilization of the brain chemicals responsible for stress.

Look behind you frequently. Tell a dog behaving well that she is good. Reassure a nervous dog that everything is OK.

Secure the pet in the car. An unrestrained pet can interfere with driving and become a hazardous projectile in the event of an accident or sudden stop, hitting the windshield, injuring a passenger or knocking the driver over (or out) resulting in loss of control of the car.

- Another reason to keep pets in the back seat or in a crate is that airbags can pose hazards to smaller people and pets. Air bags can launch out of the dashboard at a great enough force to severely injure a pet or small human. Some cars come with on/off switches for the bags. Visit www.NHTSA.gov for details about switches as well as a list of dealers and repair businesses that install them. FYI, air bags can be deactivated by a car dealer, but this could affect a vehicle warranty or insurance.

Get your pet used to the car and make them feel comfortable. Often, the only time pets ride in the car is when they're visiting the vet, so they may not always associate a car ride with positive feelings and may even be afraid to ride in the car. Teach them instead that car rides can be fun by taking them for short road trips to a dog park or a friend's house for a play date.

Be sure to keep the dog's leash firmly in hand when loading and unloading the dog from the car.

Always keep a current i.d. tag on the pet in case the pet manages to escape. Make sure the collar cannot slip off. Especially when traveling, it's important that the i.d. tag include an easily accessible number, such as your cell phone number.

Keep the windows rolled up high enough so that the dog cannot squeeze out. Dogs can make themselves very skinny in order to escape through a window, even in a moving vehicle.

Secure the dog so that he cannot hit buttons for electric windows, adjustable mirrors, etc. Dogs have gotten their heads stuck in electric windows after activating them. Securing the dog will also help in case

Always put your pet on the leash before opening the door!

.Don't

Don't let your carefully harnessed dog hang his head out the car window: dust and debris can fly into his eyes and nose. It's not safe; we would not let our child do this, would we? The same rule applies for dogs.

Do not leave your dog alone in the car! If you need a restroom and the building doesn't allow dogs, park in the shade, leave the car windows open (but not so the dog can jump out), and move fast. Heat builds up in a closed car with incredible speed, even when the outside temperature is fairly mild.

Do not allow pets to ride in the front seat, no matter how much the pet enjoys it. Pets riding in the front seat can be thrown into the windshield if you have to make a sudden stop. Also, the pet can climb on the driver's lap, interfere with driving or fall down by the gas and brake pedals, causing an accident.

Don't put your dog in the back of the truck! Even in a crate (which is somewhat better), it's cold and can stress the dog, making the car ride miserable for him. If at all possible please let your dog ride inside the truck!

Don't let dogs ride with their head out of the window. They can easily be injured by debris flying into their eyes.

Plan ahead & What to Bring on Your Trip

As much fun as it can be for both the pet and the family to bring your dog along on a trip, traveling with animals generally requires a bit more planning. If you're staying in hotels, make sure they're pet friendly before you book. And keep in mind that some hotels and motels that say they allow animals may have weight limits.

Other things to consider:

If your pet is unaccustomed to car trips, take her on several short rides before attempting a long one. Make sure that the first few car trips are to pleasant places, so that the dog will associate drives with positive experiences.

Exercise your dog prior to a long trip A tired dog will be less anxious and nervous due to the stabilization of the brain chemicals responsible for stress.

Have a leash handy so you can leash your dog before opening the door or tailgate to let them out

Prepare a doggie bag. Make sure it contains clean-up supplies, a towel, portable feeding/watering bowls, food and water, a pet first aid kit, and toys to keep them busy and well behaved.

Make sure your pet has proper identification. Just in case he or she gets lost while traveling, you want to be sure your pet is wearing up-to-date ID tags with an emergency contact phone number and what, if any, reward is offered for the pet's safe return. **Add your cell number to the i.d. tag!**

Research eating establishments that allow dogs, there are many places now that have outside eating areas! Or, pack a picnic and find a nice spot (rest stop) for you and your dog to re-charge!

Give your dog a new toy for travel; a "new" toy will entice your dog to pass the time playing with its new toy.

Seat belt harness/restraints: See below for choices

Cargo area mat or liner mats and liners help protect carpets and make cleanup easier. Look for one with a 2-3 inch lip around the edge to keep spills contained.

Mat/travel bed: If you have a pet bed at home, you can bring it along to help keep your pet comfortable and make them feel more secure. Or get one just for your car. Beds for the cargo area are one option, as are hammocks that fit over the rear seat area.

Loading ramp Smaller and older dogs can more easily get in and out using a ramp, and it makes loading easier on your back, too. A variety of models and sizes are available.

What to bring

Checklist:

Pack all your supplies in a zippered tote. If you travel often with pets, some of this stuff can just be stored in the tote at home. If you have more than one pet, the best bet is to bring a separate tote for each one.

That way, you can keep their food, medications, and toys organized. Some suggestions for the tote include:

Bring recent vaccination and medical records. Should your pet become ill, these documents can save valuable time and expense.

Bring a photo It's a good idea to carry a recent picture of your pet. The easiest way is to take one with your phone, or bring a print. If you get separated from your pet, a picture is really worth a thousand words.

Collar ID Tag - Get one with your pet's name, your name, and your telephone number. A cell number is best for the road, or you can tape a local number to the collar. Bring along your own vet's number, too. Permanent microchips for tracking are also available. Ask your vet.

First aid kit in your car: keeping it within reach from the driver's seat. Include items for both human and pet injuries. You can get pre-packed canine first aid kits on-line and in many pet supply stores. The American Red Cross also has great information and offers CPR classes not only for humans, but for pets too. <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family/pets>

Pre-packaged food - Bring along your pet's usual food, and prepack each meal in a Ziplock bag. Familiar food is good for your pet on the road, and can save money over buying as you go. Packing by serving is less messy and more convenient. If you have more than one pet, label each one's food separately and always bring spares in case you get stuck.

Biscuits, treats, toys - A favorite toy or two relieves stress.

Water in reseal able plastic container - Any plastic bowl will do, but a number of sources offer specialty travel bowls.

Dog towels - if your dogs like to swim, bring along some old towels. They're also handy if the pooch takes an unexpected mud bath. Your friends and hotel staffs will thank you.

Leash, and maybe a longer run - It should be obvious, but don't forget the leash. A longer run is good if you're going to be tying the dog outside.

Documentation of shots - Don't leave home without them.

Medications - Don't forget any pills, ointments, or anything else you give your pet at home.

Plastic bags: For cleaning up after your pet.

Cleaning supplies: In case there's an upset stomach or "accident" on the road.

Loading ramp

Smaller and older dogs can more easily get in and out using a ramp, and it makes loading easier on your back, too. A variety of models and sizes are available

While on the road

Stop every couple of hours to let your pet take a break and have some water.

Never let your pet ride with its head out the window - eye, ear, and head injuries could result.

Don't leave a pet in the car unattended in the car without leaving windows a few inches open. Open the sunroof if you have one. And **never, ever leave a pet in the car on hot days!**

If you're traveling with other people, take turns using the restroom instead of leaving your pets alone in the car; if it's a hot day, leave the air-conditioned running.

Find places to eat that allow dogs, there are many places now that have outside eating areas! Or pack a picnic and find a nice spot for you and your dog to re-charge!

Travel Sickness

Dr. Ernie's tips to combat motion sickness

Many pets experience nausea, anxiety and stress when riding in cars. Both natural remedies and conventional medications are available. To calm a nervous stomach, try these suggestions:

Remedies to prevent car-sickness:

Avoid feeding your dog within three hours before a ride. Give him an opportunity to potty before the trip. Some vets suggest limiting water consumption just before the ride, too.

Be prepared in case your dog becomes nauseous in the car. Cover the seats, bring towels, paper towels and baggies, give a back seat dog **plenty of air, play soothing music, and do not play music too loudly.** Though a Dog's Ear has a nice selection of CD's that are selected just for dogs:
<http://throughadogsear.com/>

For long road trips, give yourself and your pet a **rest stop and take a walk every two or three hours.**

Natural Calming Aids:

Curing Pills - A Chinese herb found at high-quality health stores. A medium dog would take about ¼ vial mixed in warm water every three to four hours. <http://www.altpetvet.net/curingpills150capsules.aspx>

Lavender Oil - Try a few drops on a cloth in the car or crate.

Ginger as a natural way to prevent travel sickness. You can use grated raw ginger or powdered ginger root capsules.

Melatonin - May help some dogs and cats with travel anxiety.

Dog Appeasing Pheromone (DAP) - A calming pheromone derived from a compound secreted in mother's milk to relax nursing pups. **Feliway** - A similar product for cats.

Medications:

Dramamine - A 20 pound dog should be given about 50-mg an hour before travel.

Benadryl - Helps many stressed pets. Small dogs and cats should receive 12.5-mg every 4 to 8 hours and larger dogs should be started at 25-mg.

Rescue Remedy, a Bach flower essence available in most health food stores, is a natural stress reliever that many folks keep on hand at home and in travel kits. It can often help both people and animals recover from injury, fright, illness, travel fatigue, chocolate ingestion and irritation. Put a few drops in the dog's water bowl or portable water container.

Once you arrive at your destination

Take your dog for a walk as soon as you arrive at your destination.

Let him potty, stretch his legs and get a drink of water

Loading ramp - Smaller and older dogs can more easily get in and out using a ramp, and it makes loading easier on your back, too. A variety of models and sizes are available. Telescoping or foldable models provide extra length without being too long to fit in your car.

Equipment choices

Best Bet, a Seat-Belt Harness for Your Dog

None of us would ever dream of letting an infant or child ride in a car without appropriate safety restraints; protect your dog the same way.

Look for broad, thickly padded straps, especially the strap running down the center of the dog's chest. The broad straps will distribute the force of the impact as widely as possible, and the padding will cushion the dog's chest wall and hopefully prevent or at least minimize crushing. Look for a seat-belt harness fastener like those on an actual car seatbelt, which obviously have been tested for crashworthiness. The same consideration should be taken for the tether between the seat-belt harness and the seatbelt buckle.

The tether should be short. Your dog could be sent flying forward in a crash with more thrust if her seat-belt harness tether is too long (try to keep it to about 1 ½ feet long, making sure the dog can lie down and sit up comfortably). Also make sure tether is fastened at the dog's back, not at her neck.

Caution: Do not use a walking harness as a seat-belt; they are not made for this kind of restraint! Also they can sometimes reach the walking harness and chew through it.

Second Best - Dog Crate for the Car

Generally speaking, a properly fastened seat-belt harness is safer than a crate; but plenty of dogs are more at ease traveling in crates.

Because crates can be destroyed in a crash, **buy the sturdiest crate** you can. Place it in the car with the long side against the seat back, and then **secure it not only with the seatbelt but also with a couple of wide, heavy-duty luggage straps**, or bungee cords. You might have a mechanic install anchors for these.

Third Best – The Barrier Device

Car barriers are designed to block off a section of the car. Some are placed behind the front seats to keep a dog in the back seats. Others are placed behind the back seats in SUVs to keep a dog in the cargo area. Barriers may be rigid and made of metal or plastic; they may also be soft and made of cloth or mesh

material. The main safety benefit of barriers is that they keep your dog away from you, minimizing distraction. They may also prevent your dog from becoming a projectile in a crash. However, the barrier can easily come apart in the impact of a crash. Even if the barrier stays intact, the dog will still be thrown against it and around that area of the car. Basically, a barrier is better than nothing, but not as good as a harness or crate.

Paw-Rescue has some great tips; see these websites for more information:

Travel with Pets -- Packing, Preparation and Other Trip Tips:

http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_Travel.php

Hiking, camping and Swimming with your Dog:

http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_Hiking.php

Hotels, Motels, Lodging with Pets:

http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_Lodging.php

First Aid Kit and Guidance:

Keep a pet First Aid Kit in your home and car. Take the one you keep in your car with you on trips with your pet. This webpage lists items to include:

http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_FirstAid.php

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center emergency 24-hour hotline at 1-888-4-ANI-HELP

Sources:

Dog Automobile Safety Measures By Jenna Stregowski, RVT, About.com Guide

Keep you and your pet safe in the car by following a few simple tips (emdot, Flickr).by: Josh Max

Pooch Protection 101: Keeping Your Dog Safe In Your Car; Six Tips For Pet-Safe Travel Posted: Mar 08, 2011 | By: Josh Max | AOL Autos

www.paw-rescue.org Partnership for Animal Welfare P.O. Box 1074, Greenbelt, MD 20768

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/2011/05/safe-road-tripping-with-pets/index.htm>

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