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Pet Travel Safety Tips

-Dr. Wes Sperry



Summer is upon us, and with that many people are traveling for vacation. Many times our furry friends get to come along with us. Here are some tips to make sure the trip goes smoothly.

Car trips



1. Heat- The first thing to remember about car trips is that the car gets hot VERY QUICKLY when the ac is not running. When you stop for meals, do not leave your pet in the car while you eat, even if it is "only for a minute". Plan to eat in the car, or stop at pet friendly places

where the pet can eat with you. If your pet is riding in a carrier, make sure they are getting air circulation and are cool enough.

2. Breaks- Your furry friends need potty breaks just like we do. With dogs, it is good to walk them anytime you stop to stretch your legs. USE A LEASH. Most of the time you are close to an Interstate, and even the most well trained dog will sometimes get spooked as a loud semi drives by, causing the dog to bolt. For cats, it is good to let them out of the carrier every few hours and let them roam in the car (NOT OUT OF THE CAR), and give them access to a litter box.
3. Car Sickness- If your pet gets car sick (vomits in the car), let us know. There are meds they can take to help alleviate this. Some are OTC, others are prescription we have here. We would be happy to discuss which would be best for your pet.
4. Sedation- Some pets are just too amped up or are too frightened to be good passengers. While we try to use this as a last resort, we can offer some mild sedatives to help calm your pet. Be aware, though, that these are not guaranteed to work, and especially in cats can have the opposite effect.
 1. Some other things to try are a thunder shirt (for mild anxieties) and Dog Appeasing Pheromone (DAP) collars and spray. They also have a cat appeasing pheromone, not sure if they have it in a collar. The cat pheromone comes in a spray to spray in their carrier.
5. Getting Ready- If your pet does not ride in a car on a regular basis, it might be wise to take your pet on a few rides around town before the trip. Start with a trip around the block, and gradually increase the distance.
6. Restraint- If possible, it is always a good idea for your pet to have some restraint, be it in a carrier or pet seat belt. You can get gates that keep them in the back seat. This prevents them from jumping on you and causing a wreck, as well as keeps them from flying everywhere in the event of a wreck.

Airplane trips



1. Be Prepared- The number 1 thing you must do for your pet to fly is **KNOW THE AIRLINES REQUIREMENTS**. These differ from airline to airline. You need to know what paperwork, what vaccines, and where your pet can ride. Often small pets can ride with you, but there are restrictions on size of carrier. Also, not all carriers are airline approved. Contact the airline as soon as you know you are flying as some of the requirements are time sensitive.
2. Make sure you pet has plenty of warm blankets, etc, if flying in the winter, and plenty of air circulation if flying in the summer.
3. Sedation- Again, we can offer some mild sedation for traveling, but this is a last resort.
4. Snub nosed pets- If your pet is a brachycephalic, or snub-nosed breed (English Bulldog, Pug, Persian cat), they are more susceptible to heat and stress issues due to their increased difficulty in breathing (breathing is a dog and cat's main way to cool themselves). It might be better to board these pets or hire a sitter.

Both



1. Medications- If your pet is on medication, especially medication for a chronic condition, make sure you have enough to make it through the trip. Getting a refill is often not as simple as us calling it in to a pharmacy.
2. Records- Keep an updated copy of your pet's vaccine records with you. We are happy to provide one, just drop by. Also, make sure you have an up to date rabies tag and ID tag for your pet, with current contact information.
3. Vaccines- On that note, make sure your pet is up to date on vaccines. Many hotels, day cares, etc. require up to date vaccines.
4. Veterinarian- Make sure to carry your veterinarian's contact information. Also, there are several places to look for emergency veterinarians along your travel route (see the AVMA link below).

For more really good information about traveling with your pet, check out the AVMA at www.avma.org/public/petcare/pages/default.aspx and scroll down to the "out and about" section. You can also search the Lifelearn Database on our website: <http://www.aranimalclinic.com/library/lifelearn> and search "travel".

One last thing. If you are planning on boarding your pet while you travel, please book the space as soon as you can. This goes double for holidays. We fill up fast, and finding a last minute place for your pet before a holiday can be difficult and expensive (often the only places with last minute space are the high end boutique boarding facilities).