

Paws, Claws and Automobiles: Traveling with Your Pet

Going on vacation should be exciting, fun and most importantly a chance to get away from stress and irritations. Unfortunately, if you are a pet owner, going on vacation can bring up a whole new bunch of questions and stress factors that have to be considered. Does your pet get to go with you or will he have to remain behind? If you do leave him, who will care for him while you are gone? Will a trusted friend or family member take care of your furry baby, or will you hire a pet care service to come into your home? If that is not an option, will you be boarding your pet at a kennel? All of these things are stressful enough, but what if you decide to take your pet with you on vacation? Talk about a whole new set of worries to take into consideration!

Doggies on a Drive, Cats in a Car: How to Road trip with Fluffy and Rover

Some pets, (yes, even cats) love a good car ride. Some of them would rather chase behind them, or patiently watch for them to drive away rather than get into a car and go down the block. Knowing which pet you actually have before setting off on your vacation is key to a smooth road trip. Does your pet get carsick backing down the driveway? Did you luck out and get the dog that will happily stick his head out of the window and ride off into the sunset? Will your pet ride in one spot, or will you have to keep chasing him off of the driver's lap for safety's sake? Before leaving for vacation, take your pet on a few short trips to get a basic idea of what kind of a rider he is. Once you know how he behaves in the car you will then have an idea of what kind of adjustments you will need to make with him, if any.

If your pet freaks out the minute the car is started and howls and whines the entire trip, you have to seriously consider whether it is worth taking him along. You can try starting the car beforehand and bringing the pet out afterward to see if that helps. If not, consider calling the vet for a prescription sedative to help relax your overwrought pet. (This may also be helpful for pets that are prone to motion sickness.) Because a tranquilized pet may be too drowsy to hold himself upright, it might be necessary to keep in a carrier or crate for the duration of the ride.

A pet carrier or crate might be necessary for a lot of reasons, including safety. If your pet is one that will run wildly back and forth around the vehicle, keeping him contained may become necessary. Trying to drive with a cat under your pedals or a dog trying to edge himself behind your back can be more than just annoying, it is an accident just waiting to happen! If you know that your pet will not settle down and patiently watch out of a window, then he must be put in an approved carrier. Make sure that it is of the proper size, sturdy and well ventilated. Do not put your carrier on the backseat where it might fall off, but do place it on the back floorboards. If

your pet is in a carrier, make sure that you give yourself the time for frequent potty and leg stretching breaks. A cooped up pet will be crazed when you get to your destination, so keep that in mind as well.

If your pet is prone to motion sickness, then frequent stops become even more important. Do not allow your best friend to be stuck in a dirty cage. Being miserable is no way to spend a vacation, even if you have four legs.

And finally, remember that temperature issues may be more of a problem for your pets than for you, especially if they are stuck in a crate. If you are traveling during winter weather, make sure that the crate has a warm blanket lining the bottom of it so that your pet can snuggle when he is feeling cold. In warmer weather, realize that if you are feeling hot and sticky, it is probably far worse for your pet, so frequent water and fresh air breaks become even more necessary. Again, remember that hot weather may affect some pets in different ways and those that have never been carsick before might have problems because of the heat. If you must travel during hot weather, try to head out during the early morning or late evening hours, stopping for longer breaks during the hotter afternoons.

Pet Gear for Car Rides: What to Pack

Besides a good crate or carrier, there are a few things that you will want to pack for your pet's trip. Don't forget that he will need a few items to keep him calm and under control as well. Make a list so that you can keep track of the pet's needs and so that nothing is left behind once you reach your destination. These items include:

- 1) The collar, leash or harness. Make sure that your pet is well acquainted with all of these items right before taking him out of the car at a roadside rest area is not the time to spring new gear on your pet. If your pet is not well behaved on a leash or harness it might be necessary to muzzle him as well, especially in the case of some of the larger breed dogs. It does not matter how gentle and sweet that you think your pooch is, others may view him as a menace. Do not risk causing an uproar in a public setting by training or muzzling your pet. Make sure that his collar fits well and has all of the necessary tags firmly attached. Your pet should not only have his registration tag and rabies vaccine on his collar, he should have information that will allow him to be found if he gets away from you. This should include the pet's name, your address, phone number and if pertinent, health information.

- 2) Your pet's familiar food products, including treats. Traveling any length of time is hard enough on a pet, but throwing in a whole new diet is potentially devastating. There is a chance that you will not find the dog or cat food that

your pet is used to having, especially in the case of organic or regional foods, so keep that in mind. Take enough of the food to get you through the trip, keeping it in a sealed container.

3) Water and food bowls that are sturdy enough for the trip but not expensive in case they get lost during your vacation. You will need to make frequent water breaks during your trip, so you will of course need a bowl for your pet to drink from. Familiarity is a good idea here as well.

4) Toys and other familiar items. If your pet has a favorite lovie, then by all means bring it as well.

5) Any medications that your pet needs, as well as your veterinarian's phone number. If you are traveling far from home, ask your vet for recommendations while en route as well as at your destination.

Cats and Dogs Do Not Have Wings: When Your Pet is Going to Fly

Not all trips are feasible by car, so flying becomes the only option. While it may seem to be a fairly simple process to you, airplane travel might be almost devastating to your pet. If your pet is prone to motion sickness when traveling by car, it might be just as bad, or worse in the air. If you know that to be the case, consider whether you can get the necessary medications for your pet before the trip or revisit the boarding kennel idea. It is not going to be a very fun vacation if you are spending the first day or so dealing with an ill and miserable furry friend.

Before making any major arrangements, call ahead and check with your destination. Is your pet even allowed? Once you confirm that your pet is going to be welcomed once you arrive, your next step will be to call either your travel agent if you are using one, or the airline directly if you are making your own arrangements for further guidelines. Using a travel agent may lessen some of your stress, but only if they are experienced in handling travel arrangements for pets as well as people.

If you are not using a travel agent, then call ahead and get their information regarding travel with pets, including which pets are and are not permissible on their flights. For most common pets there are three flight options to choose from, but there are drawbacks to consider for each choice. Make sure that you know what the exact rules are before even heading down to the airport. You do not want to get to the day of your scheduled departure and find out that you are going to be delayed, or worse not boarding at all. Do not allow a slight issue destroy all of your best-laid plans, prepare ahead of time and make sure that you know exactly what to expect.

The first option to consider is traveling with your pet as a carry on. This is only viable with smaller animals as the ruling states that they must be in an approved carrier that will fit under your seat. Your pet must remain securely fastened within the carrier at all times during the flight. You must also understand that the airline may refuse to allow your pet to be boarded even if all of the conditions are met because of other reasons that are at their sole discretion. If your pet has an odor or is obviously going to be distracting to other passengers for any reason at all, then the airline will not allow him to fly.

The second option is considered "accompanied baggage". With this option, your pet and carrier will be checked in along with other luggage in the cargo hold. To qualify as accompanied baggage, you and your pet must be traveling on the same flight. Because he will be back in the cargo area, be aware of any temperature extremes in either direction. Airlines will not allow animals to be loaded if it is either too hot or too cold, so check before departing for the airport. Your pet must be fairly comfortable in his carrier, and you must make sure that it complies with all of the airline guidelines. You can get this information directly from the airline as well as from reputable pet supply dealers.

The third travel option for your pet is as a "live animal shipment". This option eliminates the need to be on the same flight as your pet, although most people would prefer it, and can be faster than the other option in some cases. Your pet will again travel in the cargo hold, but may be shipped on an expedited delivery service instead of having to wait around for a secondary flight. The basic guidelines for this option are the same as described in the previous section, just make sure that your pet is in a comfortable, approved carrier and monitor the weather conditions beforehand.

If you are traveling out of the country with your pet, there might be other rules to consider, and you should know what the guidelines are from the standpoint of both ends of your flight. Will you still be in compliance with accepted guidelines when you get to the other end of your flight? Remember, some foreign airports have different rulings for pet travel, so call ahead. You do not want to hit a travel snag on the way home from vacation. Also, make sure you know if there is compulsory health quarantine for your pet when you get to your destination and make arrangements accordingly. If your dog will be held in customs for five days, is it really worth it to bring him along for a one-week stay? Know before you go, and use your best judgment.

Some basic rules to be aware of when flying with your pets:

1) All pets must be old enough to travel. Most airlines define "old enough" as over eight weeks of age and fully weaned. In addition, any animal deemed as potentially unhealthy or problematic will not be allowed to board. Remember, the airline has the final say on who does or does not get on their airplanes.

2) Most, but not all airlines and some destinations will require a health certificate for your pet. This certificate must be obtained from your veterinarian no more than two weeks prior to flight. Call the airline for their exact requirements for vet checks.

3) All carriers must be airline certified with a securely fastening door and latch, and in some cases, a lock. (Some pets that are deemed as dangerous or potentially dangerous will only be allowed to travel under lock and key and must be muzzled during flight.)

Some other guidelines to consider:

1) Some pets will not travel well. If your pet is prone to severe motion sickness, air travel will be a miserable experience for him. Also, keep in mind that certain dog breeds are really not good airplane passengers because of their physiology. These include the pug, the boxer and the Boston Terrier because of their pushed in noses. Because they have issues with breathing, the higher altitudes can be devastating for these breeds.

2) Consider the length and timing of the flight itself. During the hot months of the summer and the cold months of the winter, make sure that the bulk of the flight time will be during more temperate parts of the day. In the summer, for instance, make sure that flights are scheduled for during the earlier morning or later afternoon periods. Cargo holds can be miserable when it is very hot or very cold, so keep that in mind. Try to schedule direct, non-stop flights. Avoid weekend or holiday flights if possible as these can be overcrowded, and your chance of being bumped goes up. You do not want to get bumped from a flight with a carrier and an unhappy pet.

3) Airlines for the most part do not have an actual ruling about tranquilizer use for your pet during a flight, as they consider that to be a personal decision between the pet owner and the veterinarian. The consensus is that it is not a good idea to tranquilize your pet before a flight because the high altitude may cause a reaction mid-flight. Discuss any concerns you have with the vet before your flight.

Making the Arrangements: Proper Planning and Standby Status

Travel plans can be a pain to complete, but with a pet it can be even worse. Although it is cheaper to make your own plans and reservations, it might be worth the additional expense to consider using a travel agent, especially one that is familiar with pet travel policies. There are many factors to keep in mind and the average person probably would be shocked to find out how many things that they did not even dream of until they come up. Knowing what to expect is a good idea, but it is also wise to keep in mind that even the best laid plans can sometimes backfire. For these moments, it is beneficial to have a back up plan in place as well.

Once you get to the airport and start through security checkpoints, what will you do if your pet is disallowed for one reason or another? Will you then have to miss your flight and possibly lose out on your entire vacation? In this instance it is in your best interest to have a friend on standby that can pick your pet up at the airport. Make sure that you find out what the airline policy is in this case. Will your friend be able to just pick up your pet, or will you need to sign a form for this to happen?

If your friend does have to pick up the pet and carrier, what will happen next? Will your friend then pet sit for you, or will the pet be taken to another friend, family member or kennel? If it is the friend, will the pet be going to your home or his? Will this friend have a way to get to his food, and how well does the friend know the pet's routine? Consider typing this information all out, and giving to your friend, just in case. If your friend is in fact taking the pet somewhere else, you must ask yourself the same questions. Will the second person know the dog's routine as well?

If your pet is going to be taken from the airport to a kennel, will the kennel have a spot open for him? Some kennels fill up quickly, so make sure that you have a standby spot open for your pet just in case it becomes necessary. Ask ahead of time if you will need to pay for this status, and what your time limit is.

Working with a travel agent will reduce the number of what ifs that you will need to plan for- they will have the arrangements in mind when they book your trip. A good agent will know beforehand if you need certification and what the ruling for it is. They can make sure that you have the right carrier, and if not, can point you to the right brand and style. Agents can also help you find the right hotel chains for your destination- they will know which are pet friendly and which are not. More and more hotel chains are realizing how many pets are treated the same as family members and are making adjustments in their policies. Good, pet friendly hotel chains will often make it more appealing to pet owners and will encourage travel agents to advertise this fact.

Remember though, even the best travel agent is only human and occasionally will miss a ruling change. Even when using a travel agent, make sure that you have standby plans in mind.

Mints and Chew Toys on the Pillow: Hotel Stays for Your Pets

Once upon a time, it was unheard of to even consider taking your pet to a hotel, unless you snuck them in and then worried the entire time. Now, times have changed and hotels have not only rethought their policies, they have thrown open their doggy doors and welcomed all of the furry guests with special amenities and pet perks. Before heading out with your pet for your vacation, make sure that you call and confirm that your pet is in fact allowed to stay with you. Ask about the pet policy when you call to confirm your reservation. Some hotels will only allow certain types or sizes of pets.

Hotels that do welcome pets are usually listed on pet information websites, and will get ratings based on how well they treat their four legged guests. Look for hotels that offer pet daycare while the humans are off on sightseeing trips, or that can offer information about the local hot spots for pets. Hotels that are really pet friendly may even offer pet spa treatments, or will have listings for and directions to pet parks, vets and other pet related businesses. Make sure that your pet friendly hotel lists the local pet laws, and if they do not, ask. (If you do have to ask, gently suggest that they include this information for future guests.)

Some hotels offer doggy beds or kitty condos in each room, something most pet owners find very encouraging. Of course, some hotels will claim to be pet friendly, but will not have made any changes in their policies to indicate that this is true at all. Just allowing a pet to stay in a regular hotel room does not make a hotel technically "pet friendly". The difference is in the extra special care that the true pet friendly places show to your dog or cat, and those extras should be recognized.

If you have a truly rewarding stay with your pet, make sure that the hotel is recognized, not only within the chain, but also in the business community at large. Too often, people only write reviews when there is something negative to say, but positive reviews are necessary so that these places will keep up the good work. And besides, like a good doggy or sweet kitty, hotels need a pat on the head from time to time, too!

Out of the Country: When Fido Goes International

Traveling out of the country can often mean a lot of documentation, paperwork and the dreaded shots for humans, but can mean even more of those for doggy or kitty. Before your travel plans are finalized, make sure you know all of the necessary rules regarding shots, papers and

certifications. Make sure that you know what to expect when you get to your destination- will your pet face a lengthy quarantine for instance? How long will it take before they unload your pet from the plane itself? Check to see weather or not you will be able to visit your pet if there is quarantine.

Remember, that there might be some very different animal laws in place in your chosen destination so it is beneficial to know them before hand as well. Do you need to have all dogs muzzled, for instance? Are there certain areas of your destination city that animals are not allowed? Will you have access to a dog park at all? Make sure that you know where your dog or cat will be staying as well. Are there any pet friendly hotels in the local area? Do you know what pet friendly means to the country in question? Know exactly what to expect once you arrive and make your plans accordingly.

International rules and guidelines can change, almost overnight it seems, so make sure that you check and confirm your plans, including the pet policies before departing. Some countries will not allow pets of any kind within their borders, so know before you go. (For the sake of clarity, make sure you also call and confirm the status of helper animals that may include: dogs, monkeys and miniature horses. Some of these are not as easily accommodated nor accepted, so call first.)

Before you leave, make sure that you check your general guidelines for the return trip as well. Some animals that are returning from foreign countries will need special immunizations as well, so you do need to make sure you confirm what is expected from both ends of your trip.

Other Modes of Transportation: Special Considerations

Sometimes going by car or by plane is not in the cards. Trains and boats will have special ruling for pets as well, and as always, you need to know what to expect before you get ready to go. There is nothing worse than having to rethink a vacation the day that it is about to start. Call the train station, or the cruise line if you are making your own arrangements or ask your agent if you are allowing a professional to handle the details. Some cruise lines are making it easier to travel with your four legged friends, but depending on the length and destination, might not be in anyone's best interest. Do you really think a two-week cruise is a good idea with a hyperactive lab for instance?

No matter where you are going, no matter how you plan to get there, no matter how long you plan to stay, you want your pet to be happy and healthy while you are there, and you want to enjoy the trip as well. Make sure that your dog or cat will not be stuck in a cargo hold or penned up the

entire time, or why bother? If you will not be allowed to interact with your furry friend, they might as well just stay at home or in a kennel.

More than Just a Trip: When You Are Moving, Considerations for Your Pets

Moving your pet, whether it is across town or across the country can be quite an ordeal, but if you use some simple guidelines and careful planning you can lessen the amount of stress on everybody involved. Some of the moving basics are the same as traveling with your pet- make sure that they will be comfortable while en route and make sure that they will feel comfortable once they arrive.

For dogs and cats, moving can be a fairly traumatic experience- there is way too much activity going on all around them, and nobody seems to have the time to cuddle them like they would like. On the day of the big move, they are suddenly thrust into a carrier, carted off and then released into a house that does not smell right at all. To ease some of the transitional problems, consider these tips:

- 1) Make sure that your pet is familiar with and comfortable in a pet carrier or crate. If you have not previously crated your pet, buy or borrow one of the right size at least a week before the move and allow him to freely investigate it at will. Follow standard car trip guidelines from there.
- 2) If the move is of a fairly short distance and it is possible, consider taking your dog or cat to the new home to sniff around. Remember that even the most well trained animal might feel a desire to "mark" his territory, so be vigilant especially at first. If you cannot take the pet to the new home before hand, introduce him to his new surroundings as slowly and calmly as possible. Try to make the new home at least moderately familiar by putting food and water dishes in the same places, and make sure that he has his old bedding to cuddle into for reassurance. Remain patient as your pet makes the adjustment process.
- 3) Ask your vet for records, including any recent vaccines, and make sure that they are all up to date before leaving the area. You do not want to get to a new place and have to start looking for a vet right away.
- 4) Know the local zoning laws for where you are going, especially if you are unfamiliar with the area. Certain breeds are restricted, for instance, so if there is any question at all, find out before the move. Also, some cities and specialty communities restrict the number of pets that are allowed, so you must know this as well.

Moving Small Pets

1) Small pets do not care where you plunk their cages down, as long as someone comes along every so often to feed and clean them. Do not worry as much about the trauma of moving mice, gerbils and other small pets, but keep in mind that some species are not allowable in certain cities or states. Before moving any pet, find out the local laws. Snakes and other reptiles, for instance, are subject to laws that differ wildly from place to place, so keep that in mind.

2) Depending on the distance, it may not be truly worth it to try to move parakeets, finches and other small bird species. For them, the trauma of moving and settling into a new home may be too much to bear. In the best interest of your feathered friend, consider giving him away to a local resident before trying the move with him.

Moving Fish

1) Moving fish and the aquarium may be very difficult and not worth the huge amount of work. Fish are fairly fragile creatures that might not actually survive the move, especially if it is a long distance. Injuries can occur during the move, as the change in water or temperature might stress them beyond their ability to survive. And, if the fish do make it to the new house in one piece, what will you do if their aquarium is leaking or worse, broken? Will you really be able to drop everything and run to get a new one? How long do you think guppies can survive in a multitude of drinking glasses while you are on the hunt for the local pet store? If you do have a lot of fish, consider dismantling and selling the aquarium, making arrangements to have a new one waiting for you in your new location. Air-ship your fish if possible, especially if you are moving more than one state away.

2) Once you, your fish and the aquarium have made it to the new house, you must be careful about the water you will fill it with. Your fish have lived, surrounded by your old home's water, and are adapted to it, so it might be a huge shock to their system to have water that is completely different all of a sudden. Watch your fish for any sign of shock or trauma such as erratic swimming, refusing to feed or outright dying off. And, be careful about the general temperature changes from one area to the other- fish are very temperature sensitive.

Moving Bigger Animals

If you are moving farm type animals, you need to know what the zoning laws are in your new area, as well as what the transportation laws are for getting them there. Some states have mandates about horse trailers, so keep that in mind, especially if you are traveling from state to state. If you

are new to horse ownership and have never driven a horse trailer, consider taking it out for a practice spin, sans pony, of course. Get used to handling the trailer, which can prove to be quite difficult before allowing the animal to be loaded.

For all animals, make sure that they are allowed in the community that you are heading to. Even rural seeming areas have zoning laws, especially when it comes to farm animals, so make sure that you will be in complete compliance before moving your horse, pony, goat or pig.

Finally: Making Your New House Feel Like Home

No matter where you have moved to, it will take time for everyone, including the pets to settle in and feel like they are home. That is understandable. Ease the transition as much as possible by making day-to-day routines as familiar as possible. If your dog woke you up to go out at five a.m. every day and then got his bowl of kibble, allow him to do that in the new home as well. If your cat's litter box was in the laundry room in the old house, try to put it in the laundry room in the new house as well. There are bound to be a few problems here and there. Your dog might have accidents; your cat might hide under a bed for a day or two. Allow them to explore if they want, but do not force it. Eventually it will feel like home, for everybody.