

Transporting Dogs

Our topics for this week are:

- Traveling with dogs by car or truck
- Air travel for dogs

Dogs are transported more than any other pet animal. Most transportation of dogs is by car or truck. Some dogs are transported by airlines. Amtrak only allows service dogs to travel. Regulations on interstate, international, and air travel change frequently and must be rechecked each time a dog is transported.

To travel to the U.S., dogs must be more than 3 months old, vaccinated for rabies, and free of signs of infectious diseases. Livestock dogs must be evaluated for the tapeworm genus, *Echinococcus*. For interstate travel, proof of current rabies vaccination and a current health certificate should accompany the dog. Travel to Hawaii and Guam, which are rabies-free islands, has more restrictions.

International travel should be investigated at least 120 days in advance. Requirements for importation of dogs is stringent in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, and Australia. Current requirements can be obtained from the destination's embassy or consulate. A list of foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. is available from the U.S. Department of State: <http://usembassy.state.gov/> Import, export, and interstate transportation information on privately owned dogs is available at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/pet-travel>

Regardless of the means of travel, there is risk of a medical emergency or escape. A chest harness or collar should be worn with an ID tag that includes the owner's name, address, and cell phone number. Dogs that travel should be tattooed with the owner's cell phone number in their ear flap or inner surface of a hind leg. Tattoos may fade and need to be refreshed before travel to be easily read. Unlike a tattoo, an embedded microchip is not immediately able to be read by someone who may try to rescue an escaped dog, but a microchip is a good second choice to insure an escaped dog's return. A land-phone number, while traveling, is much less useful. A chest harness is more secure and prevents escapes better than a collar. A travel tag should also be attached to the harness or collar that provides the destination and destination contact information.

Travel by Cars and Truck Cabs

If transporting by car or truck cabs, dogs should ride in a back seat and be restrained in a restraint harness fastened to a seat belt buckle or in a crate that is strapped to floor anchors. This protects dogs from airbag injuries and the driver from interference with driving (vision obstruction, interference with braking) or being injured by a dog becoming a missile in an accident. More information on travel restraints is available at the Center for Pet Safety:

<http://www.centerforpetsafety.org/>

Dogs should be desensitized to car travel by experiencing frequent short trips by car to a pleasurable destination with no adverse events during their primary socialization period (6 to 12 weeks of age), or as soon after that as possible. If they will be transported in a carrier, pre-trip

training should include free access in and out of the carrier, being fed in the carrier, and sleeping in the carrier to develop a feeling of security while in the carrier.

The handler should stop every 2 to 3 hours for the dog to exercise and eliminate. If the weather is hot, water should be provided in the shade in plastic, water bowls that cannot tip over.

If the temperature is over 72°F, dogs should not be left in cars. At 72°F, the inside of a car can reach 100°F in 30 minutes. Temperatures below 55°F may be too low for some dogs. A dog should not be allowed to ride in a car with its head out of a window. They may become excited and jump which is hazardous to the dog and to other traffic. Eye injury from flying insects or other flying objects are common in dogs that stick their head out car windows.

Pictures should be carried in case of the need to search for an escaped dog. Food, water, and any needed medications should also be available during the trip.

Interstate travel must meet federal requirements. These include a certificate of veterinary inspection, provision of adequate shelter from all elements and protection from injury, sufficient cleanliness to avoid contact with urine and feces, protection against hazardous temperature extremes, uncontaminated and nutritious food at least once per day, and a program of parasite control.

Travel by Pickup Truck Beds

Dogs should not be loose or tethered in pickup beds due to the risks of being thrown out; injured by sliding around or by shifting cargo; getting eye, ear, or mouth injuries from wind and debris; and if tethered, choking. An estimated 100,000 dogs die per year in the U.S. jumping or falling from truck beds. Burns may occur from sun-heated metal.

Dogs can be safely transported in commercial kennels (also called boxes) for pickup trucks that are properly shielded, insulated, and ventilated.

Air Travel

Preparing for Air Travel

Travel should be booked with the airline as soon as possible. The number of animals per flight are limited. In temperate weather, early morning non-stop flights should be chosen whenever possible. In hot weather, early or late flights are safest; in colder weather, a mid-day flight is preferable.

Regardless of the season, it is best to avoid holiday periods for shipping dogs by air. The airlines should be contacted and asked about restrictions for dog breeds or sizes. Federal restrictions prevent air travel for dogs if less than 8 weeks or not weaned for at least 5 days.

They should have a veterinary exam for age and health related restrictions. Most require a certificate of veterinary inspection (health certificate) signed in the last 10 days. Some airlines require an acclimation certificate from a veterinarian. This is a form that will waive the airline's requirement that they prevent exposure to less than 45°F for more than 45 minutes during ground transfer or for more than 4 hours, if in a holding facility. However, an acclimation certificate cannot waive airline requirement that the dog cannot be exposed to more than 85°F for more than 45 minutes on the ground or 4 hours in a holding facility or providing a pressured cargo area for flights above 8,000 ft in altitude.

On the day of travel, the dog should be walked outside the terminal to permit it to eliminate. Only light feeding and access to water should be provided about three hours prior to

departure. Tranquilizers are not recommended due to impaired ability to maintain normal body temperature and to allow it keep its balance during travel. Tranquilizers can also exacerbate heart or respiratory problems.

Travel Crates

Travel crates approved for air travel by the Federal Aviation Administration must be big enough to allow dog to stand and turn around. Carriers for dogs traveling in the passenger section are soft-sided. Clamshell plastic crates are used for travel in cargo holds. There can be no interior protrusions. The crate should have handles or grips and a leak proof bottom with absorbent bedding or pad. Soft toys or an old shirt or sock of the owner may be placed in the carrier to add to the dog's feeling of security. The crate should be ventilated from both sides. Labels should be attached that provide the owner's name, home address, phone number, destination contact information, and sign with at least one inch high lettering stating "Live Animal", and arrows denoting the upright position. Containers for food and water need to be accessible from outside and secured inside. Leashes must be transported with the handler because they cannot be stored inside nor attached to the outside of crates.

The dog should be fed a light meal at least six hours in advance of travel. Water can be provided in the carrier without danger of spilling during the initial stages of travel by freezing the water in the carrier's water bowl prior to travel. If travel may extend more than 24 hours, a plastic pouch of dry dog food inside a cloth or mesh bag should be attached to the crate to allow handlers to feed a small meal, if indicated.

Now, let's recap the key points to remember from today's episode:

- During all types of travel, dogs should wear a chest harness
- During car transport, dogs should be in either an anchored chest harness or crate
- Dogs should never be left in a vehicle if the environmental temperature is above 72 degrees F
- Dogs should always be enclosed in an well constructed, anchored kennel ("box") when transported in a pickup truck bed.

More information on animal handling is available in my book, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint* published by CRC Press. It is also available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Don't forget serious injury or death can result from handling and restraining some animals. Safe and effective handling and restraint requires experience and continual practice. Acquisition of the needed skills should be under the supervision of an experienced animal handler.