



How to Travel Safely With Your Pet

We are all accustomed to car safety rules and devices for ourselves and our children. Seatbelt laws are commonplace and air bags are found in virtually every production vehicle in the US. Sometimes however, we forget to apply the same principles and safeguards when we are traveling with or transporting our pets. An unrestrained pet in a moving vehicle can distract you, preventing you from driving safely and greatly increasing the likelihood of an accident. In an emergency situation an unrestrained pet can not only be seriously injured but can also cause injuries to you and other passengers. The American Automobile Association estimates that unrestrained pets inside vehicles cause 30,000 car accidents every year. Even if an accident doesn't result, many thousands of injuries are suffered by unrestrained pets in vehicles thrown around or from the car in a sudden stop or turn.

More and more states are recognizing the hazards caused by distracted driving and are implementing stricter laws concerning cell phone use and unrestrained pets. Although there is no perfect system for keeping your pet safe while riding in your vehicle there are many steps you can take to minimize the chance your pet will be injured in an accident or be the cause of one.





Things We Advise You Do Not Do...

Don't let your dog hang its head out the car window.

- Just think of the debris that hits your windshield as you drive down the road. Dust, bugs, stones, leaves and other objects can make it into your pets' eyes and cause a major injury. You wouldn't let your children do this and the same risks exist.
- If you need to make a defensive maneuver your dog it is more likely to fall or be thrown from the vehicle if it is hanging out the car window.
- Dogs often jump from vehicles when stopped in traffic creating a potentially deadly situation for you, other drivers and your pet.

Don't let your dog ride unrestrained inside the vehicle

- This is simple physics. Objects in motion stay in motion. If your car is traveling at 55 miles per hour, then your pet is as well. Should you need to stop suddenly, your pet will continue to stay in motion. This could result in a 55 mile per hour impact with a window, another passenger or the driver.

Don't let your pet ride in your lap

- Just as riding with a human child in your lap is unsafe, so is riding with your furry friend in your lap.
- Should your pet panic or if you brake suddenly, your pet could be thrown around causing damage to itself or others.

Don't leave your pet unattended in your vehicle

- It is illegal in many cities and states to leave your dog unattended in a vehicle. This is true even if you left your dog with water and the windows down.
- The temperature inside your vehicle can become much hotter than the outside temperature risking your pet's life.

Don't let your pet ride in the back of a pickup truck

- This is the primary cause of animal deaths in vehicle accidents. It doesn't matter if they are tethered or loose.
- A dog tethered in a pickup bed can easily hang itself if it jumps out of the truck.



- You could be liable for injury should someone be bitten by your animal while they are in the back of your truck. This could result in a costly lawsuit that is not covered by your auto insurance.

Don't smoke in the car

- Smoking inside vehicles can increase feelings of nausea in humans and it does the same for our animals. Please smoke outside of the vehicle away from your pet.

Don't let your pet ride in the front seat

- Front seats are ok if you can disable the airbags but otherwise airbags are very powerful and can injure or kill even a restrained pet in the front seat. Just like child car seats, pets should be kept away from airbags.

Don't rely on vehicle barrier systems

- Barrier systems that prevent your dog from moving to the front of the car don't secure the pet enough to prevent injury in the event of an emergency. Barriers may keep you safer by preventing your pet from distracting you while driving, but your pet could still be injured from being thrown around behind the barrier in the event of an accident.

Don't rely on a tether that clips to a collar

- A tether secured to a dog's collar will not prevent your dog from injury and may potentially break your pet's neck in a sudden stop.

Things We Advise You Do...

Get a safety harness designed and tested as a restraint for your pet

- Safety harnesses for your pet should be designed and constructed of the same materials required for human seatbelts.
- Ideally the harness should be certified by a qualified testing facility (at this time we are aware of only one harness that has been thus tested - <http://www.ruffrider.com/>).
- Use your best judgment and select a restraint harness that is well constructed, fits your pet and allows some freedom of movement so your pet can sit up and lie down but not so much freedom of movement that it risks injury.
- Do not have your pet restrained in the front seat but if you do deactivate the air bag to that seat.



A standard harness used for walking your dog is normally not of sufficient strength for use as a restraint harness.

Get a crate for your car

- If you have room you can use a crate to restrain your pet. Make sure it is of good construction and tied down to your vehicle. Most pets also feel safer while in a crate because they won't be sliding around as much.
- Keep in mind that if you choose to use a crate to restrain your pet that the tie-down method you use may not meet 'crash' standards and may not protect your pet in the event of a serious accident or a roll over.
- Crates may serve to keep your pet confined should emergency personnel need to care for you. It makes it easier for them to concentrate on caring for you first in the case of injury.
- Always attach information to your crate with your name, address, phone number, veterinarian's contact details and your pets' information. You should keep a form on file with your vet allowing your pet to receive medical care in the case of emergency when you are unable to release it.

Keep control of your animal getting into and out of the car

- Teach your dog to only get into or out of the car when released by you and always on a leash. Getting into and out of the car is a privilege and should be treated like a life reward.

Please restrain your pet while traveling. It is safer for humans and for our pets!