

Transporting Dogs in Cars and Trucks

Our topics for this week are:

- **Restraint of dogs being transported in cars or trucks**
- **Preparing dogs for car rides**
- **Care of dogs traveling by car or in truck cabs**

Restraint in Cars and Truck Cabs

More than 40,000 dogs in the U.S. are injured or killed in car accidents each year. Most injuries and deaths are associated with the lack of proper restraint during transportation. According to a survey by the American Automobile Association, only 16% of owners use restraints on their dogs while traveling by car or truck.

If transporting by car or truck cabs, dogs should ride in a back seat and be restrained in a durable restraint harness hooked to a fastened seat belt. 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. Restraint harnesses for protection during a crash are substantially better constructed than harnesses that are only intended to prevent distraction of drivers by pet's unrestrained movement in the vehicle. It is not recommended to attempt to stabilize crates with a seat belt since there is no data to prove its effectiveness. Dogs in small crates in cars are best placed on the car's or truck's back floor pressed against the front seat.

There are no federal standards or industry tests for car restraints for dogs. However, the non-profit Center for Pet Safety has testing and performance information at:
<http://www.centerforpetsafety.org/>

Training Dogs for Car Travel

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.

Care During Ground Travel

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.

If you have comments or you're interested in particular animal handling subjects, contact us at CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com

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

- 1. Dogs in cars or truck cabs should be restrained in a back seat by a sturdy harness attached to a fastened seat belt or in an anchored crate.**
- 2. Dogs should ride in the back seat to being a distraction to the driver and to avoid injuries from deployed air bags.**
- 3. Dogs should never be transported loose or tethered in an open pickup bed.**

More information on animal handling can be found in my books, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint*, *Concise Textbook of Small Animal Handling*, and *Concise Textbook of Large Animal Handling* all published by CRC Press and available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is provided at: www.betteranimalhandling.com . This website has more than 200 past podcasts with notes on handling of dogs, cats, other small mammals, birds, reptiles, horses, cattle, small ruminants, swine, and poultry.

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.