

The Right Car For Your Dog

Has your family vehicle gone to the dogs? Take comfort in our handy, breeder-approved, consumer guide.

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Becoming "involved" in dogs is rather like adding a baby to the family. Suddenly that beloved buttercup-yellow, two-seater sports car just doesn't have enough room to cart all the necessary canine paraphernalia. There's a logical progression for most dog-show people. They start off with one dog, their current car, and a hopeful attitude. After a couple of shows, they either decide the sport is not for them, or they get hooked. Being handed a purple ribbon usually sets the hook. Once reeled in, it's only a matter of time before they start shopping for a more appropriate vehicle to transport their special dogor dogs. Sometimes the next step is tentative, and in other cases it's whole hog. Finding the perfect vehicle depends on a number of things. First, the size and number of dogs one intends to transport. Then, there's the purpose of traveling with your dog(s). Are you going to dog shows, obedience trials, training classes, other performance activities, or just having a pup along for company? Some activities require copious amounts of equipment in addition to a requisite crate for each dog. And a crate really is the safest way for any dog to travel. It keeps him from being slammed forward in case of sudden stops, prevents him from distracting you while you're driving, and prevents unplanned exits from the vehicle. Another consideration is your particular comfort level. Do you require an eight-way driver's seat, CD player, Global Positioning System, or just a convenient cup holder? Are you up to piloting a rig that seems as though it should be docked rather than parked, or at home in something more maneuverable? Is your traveling limited to one- or two-day trips, or are you a regular on the open road? And last but far from least, consider the present state of your cash and credit rating. Champagne taste is hard to satisfy on a beer budget. What's available? In a word everything! Like an automotive buffet, there's an appetizing array of station wagons, mini SUVs, full-sized SUVs, mini-vans, full-sized vans, campers, trailers, fifth wheels, RVs in all sizes, and some truly unique modes of transportation. It would take a hefty tome at that, to cover all of the possibilities. Let's look at what's offered. Station Wagons Plus: Good maneuverability, relatively inexpensive to operate and maintain. Minus: Limited cargo space, not always easily accessible. Roof racks help.