

Natural Health Solutions

Travel Anxiety: Soothe car sickness and nerves with natural remedies.

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Max is a happy-go-lucky 5-year-old black Cocker Spaniel. Like many of his breed, he is full of enthusiasm and loves being around people. However, Max doesn't like riding in the car. In fact his owners, Pete and Lori, describe Max as anxious and nervous whenever he travels with them. Although he does not suffer from severe anxiety, Max exhibits classic signs of "car sickness" that occur in many pets.

Many dogs like Max have never been trained to accept traveling in the car as a normal and pleasant event. As a result, they don't enjoy riding in the car and often show serious degrees of anxiety. Anxious behaviors can include not settling down, panting, whining, drooling, vomiting, and even urinating or defecating during the ride. Because most dogs must travel at least a few times during the year (to the grooming salon, veterinarian's office or boarding facility), it's imperative that they can relax during the car ride.

There are several options to treat car sickness in dogs. Conventional medications include the well-known human drug Dramamine (dimenhydrinate). In some dogs, this anti-nausea drug can decrease reactions, such as vomiting and drooling, and may also reduce mild anxiety. Stronger medications that reduce anxiety, such as Valium (diazepam) or Serax (oxazepam), may also be prescribed.

Natural remedies

Whenever possible, I prefer a purely natural approach in order to avoid side effects, such as excessive sedation, that some dogs experience when taking conventional medications. Most dogs treated with natural therapies can travel comfortably for short car rides without requiring conventional medications. For longer rides, owners must train affected dogs to accept riding in cars for longer distances. Several natural remedies can help treat dogs like Max.

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