

## Safe Summer Travel

**Dog shows, family visits, camping, hiking, and vacations are on many travel 'to do' lists for people with dogs.**

*T. J. Dunn Jr., DVM*

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**Medications.** If your dog has a stress-inducing aversion to confinement and travel, prescription medications can save the day. Take a few trial trips to see how your dog reacts to being medicated while traveling. Your veterinarian can prescribe anti-motion sickness medication, usually an antihistamine, if your dog tends to get carsick.

If anxiety or hyper-excitability are a problem, sedation will make the trip safer and more pleasant for the dog and you. Tranquilizer or sedative doses need to be fine-tuned to each individual dog. Some dogs need twice the usual dose to overcome travel jitters, and you don't want to discover that during your trip. (The most common mistake is to medicate the dog too near the time of departure, and before the medication has reached its peak effect.)

Most healthy dogs do not require food and water for trips under six hours. Older dogs or those with diabetes, heart, kidney, respiratory compromise, or other disorders may require special care while traveling. If you have any doubts about your dog's health, have a vet examine him well ahead of your planned trip.

**Heat issues.** Don't forget about the dangers of heat stroke. Ten minutes in an unventilated car or crate in the heat and humidity is a recipe for disaster. Don't underestimate the potential for life-threatening overheating, especially with small, full-coated breeds such as the Pekingese, and brachycephalic breeds such as Bulldogs and Boston Terriers. Older dogs are much less tolerant of heat and stress, and any dog with heart or obesity problems is at considerable risk when overheating occurs.

**Air travel.** Planning is the key to air travel with your dog. Most breeders know the varied regulations different airlines impose on dogs traveling by air. Special handling services may allow you to drop off and pick up your dog in the passenger area rather than the cargo area. It may be best to ship in the early morning, so the dog travels during the cooler part of the day. Each airline has protocols for shipping dogs, so do your homework before your trip. The size of the dog and even the construction and dimensions of the travel crate are priority considerations. Current rabies vaccination status, a current health certificate from a veterinarian, and other issues need to be addressed well before any trip across state lines. And travel outside the U.S. entails strict and well-enforced regulations.

Bill Fleischer of Fleischerheim German Shepherds in Sacramento, Calif., has been breeding and importing German Shepherd Dogs for 35 years. He knows the changeable nature of airline travel requirements. "Most airlines have a policy not to ship a dog if the temperature will reach 85 degrees that day in either the city of origin or destination. In some situations a letter from a veterinarian stating that the dog is acclimatized to cold or hot weather will allow you to have the dog shipped," he says. Fleischer adds that when overseas travel is involved, it is even more important to check all regulations and protocols well in advance of your trip. The AKC website has useful information on several airlines regarding shipping a dog, but be sure to contact your airline for current requirements.

Active people and their dogs know how to have fun. But do your research far ahead of any travel plans so that you and your dog will have a far better experience than "winging it" can provide.

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