

De-Stress Your Traveling Dog Holistically

All-natural remedies to calm your dog while on the road.

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Is your dog comfortable traveling in its crate? Some crave the comforting close quarters of a crate; others enjoy riding unfettered. Some dogs prefer to see where they are going; others do not. Watch your dog's reaction. Perhaps you should cover the crate, leaving plenty of space for ventilation. Or try a wire crate or a seat belt and harness set. Whichever method you choose, don't let your dog have the run of the car.

If you stop suddenly or have an accident, an unsecured dog could crash into the windshield or be thrown around the interior of the car. In addition, a loose dog could cause an accident by interfering with your driving. Your dog should be in a secured crate or tucked into a special harness that buckles into your car's seat belt system. The seat belt-and-harness set works best for dogs heavier than 25 pounds; smaller dogs should be safely placed in a crate.

Is your dog afraid of the car or crate? If your dog is afraid of entering the car or uncomfortable being in a crate, you may need to go back to a gradual, positive introduction, combined with therapies and remedies to reduce your dog's stress during retraining. T-TEAM, a calming massage treatment, or even affectionate stroking and petting can calm your dog before, during and after car travel or a session with the crate.

In addition, calming flower remedies, such as Rescue Remedy or Five-Flower Formula, work well for some dogs. "Rescue Remedy is good for some; for others, it doesn't work," Tilford said. "Some individual flower remedies work in certain situations. You may need to consult a flower essence practitioner for additional advice on the best remedies for your situation. Administer these in conjunction with any training sessions according to the directions on the label in your dog's water, rubbed on its ears or muzzle or as part of a misting spray."

Finally, calming herbs can de-stress training sessions. Tilford recommends valerian, skullcap and oat straw as extracts, dried or fresh. Some veterinarians recommend chamomile, but Tilford believes the herb may not be the best choice. "Chamomile might work; it's hard to say. It would be best in a tea, added to some salt-free broth." Steep about 1 teaspoon of the dried herb or 3 teaspoons of fresh herb in about 1 cup of hot distilled water for 10 to 30 minutes. Strain the herb and add 2 teaspoons to 2 tablespoons to broth two to three times daily.