

Car-Sick Dog?

Five tips to help ease your dog's anxiety during car rides.

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Many owners find it necessary to travel with their pets. Whether it is a long cross-country trip or simply a short and quick trip to the veterinarian's office for a checkup, inevitably pets need to become accustomed to traveling. Although most pets travel without incident, there are a number of pets that do not travel well. These pets get nervous and or anxious during the entire trip; others get car sick and vomit or eliminate in the car or carrier during the trip. Conventional medications can help sometimes, but a more natural approach devoid of side effects is preferred.

Here are five tips to make traveling with your pet easier for you and your dog:

1. A few drops of a calming essential oil such as lavender chamomile placed on a cotton ball in the car 30 minutes before the trip may help calm the pet during the ride.
2. Pheromones such as DAP (Dog Appeasing Pheromone) can be used to reduce your dog's anxiety during car trips.
3. Herbal and nutritional remedies can also be helpful in reducing anxiety in dogs who do not like to travel in the car. Composure liquid made by VetriScience contains B vitamins, a milk protein hydrolysate, lecithin, and L-Theanine. This unique combination of natural calming ingredients is easily administered to dogs in a palatable liquid. Nutricalm, made by RX Vitamins for Pets, contains several herbs known for reducing anxiety in pets, including valerian root, ashwaganda, catnip, and kava kava, plus L-tryptophan, an amino acid known to induce restfulness.
4. Flower essences, alcoholic extracts of flowers, are well-known for reducing mild anxiety in many pets. One of the more commonly prescribed remedies is called Rescue Remedy, a mixture of five flower essences, made by the Bach company. Simply administering a few drops of the product to the dog during the trip, and when arriving at the desired destination, can help many pets suffering from mild anxiety.
5. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is important to train your pet to accept rides in the car as a normal pleasant event. A dog trainer can offer help with this behavior modification.

Want to read more about natural and holistic healthcare? Check out the Natural Health Solutions column by Shawn Messonnier, DVM, in every issue of Dog World magazine.