

Summer Time Fun (and Safety)!!

It is another fantastic start to the warm summer weather. We see lots of people enjoying the time with their dogs at dog parks, walking around trails or in town, or swimming in the local waters. Most of these activities require traveling in a vehicle with your dog.

We will freely admit that we absolutely cringe when seeing dogs with their heads sticking out of car windows or riding freely in the back of pickup trucks. We think that the vast majority of people would never consider letting a toddler or young child ride so precariously in a moving vehicle down a road; even without the mandated safety seat rules. So why do we believe that dogs are smarter or have better balance?



So here's what we picture....a vehicle needing to suddenly stop or swerve and the unsuspecting dog is jolted out of the window...or...sustains a neck injury due to slamming into the window frame...or...gets a corneal ulcer from flying gravel or grit....or....severely irritated ears from windburn. The worst scenario that we have encountered as a veterinarian is the dog that falls out of a moving vehicle and becomes severely and sometimes fatally injured. As adult humans we have the ability to foresee possible events related to circumstance, your pet is just living in the moment and cannot think of potential harmful outcomes.

In 2011 pet passenger safety survey by AAA and Kurgo Pet Products was released. At least monthly 56% of pet owners drive with their dog. Unfortunately of those respondents 65% admit that they were distracted while driving due to either petting their dog, using their arm to restrict the dog's movement while braking, blocking the dog from moving between the seats, allowing the pet to share lap space or giving treats. Studies show that a 10 lb dog involved in a crash at 50 mph exerts a force of 500 lbs; an 80 lb dog will have a force of 2400 lbs. Despite these alarming numbers, only 16% of drivers use some type of pet restraint system in a vehicle. Another eye-opening statement mentioned in the survey was a caution regarding the deadly potential of an airbag hitting a pet sitting in the front seat following a collision.

Several states have passed laws regarding uncontrolled pets in vehicles. New Jersey is the latest state to adopt a law that allows motorists to be fined for having a loose pet in the vehicle. Rhode Island and Hawaii have similar laws. Arizona, Connecticut and Maine residents already have statutes in place allowing drivers to be penalized under distracted-driving laws if they're driving with a pet in their lap.

Another summer concern with traveling with your dog is the internal temperature of a vehicle without air conditioning. The adjacent table indicates the time required for the inside of a vehicle to reach dangerous and life threatening temperatures. Even a “quick” stop at a store could become very harmful for your pet. If at all possible leave or pet at home for



shopping trips or else leave the vehicle running with the air conditioner on. Just rolling down the windows is not enough to prevent your dog from overheating.



A quick internet search finds several options for better travel safety with your friend. Doggles are a version of sunglasses for dogs. With proper incentive and training your pet can learn to comfortably wear these eye

protectors
eye injuries

and perhaps avoid
from flying debris or
options for seat belt

UV damage. Several different harnesses are also available to smaller dogs elevated seats are out the window rather than door. Other options are to secure your pet.



contain your pet while traveling. For also available so that they can see sitting on your lap or standing on the actually use crates in the vehicle to

By no means do we want to discourage people from taking road-trips with their pets. We love taking our dogs to lots of different places and they are great riders. But we recommend looking into investing in a seat belt harness in the future and keep the passenger airbag in the “off” position when your pets ride shotgun. Hope you have a happy and safe summer.

Estimated Vehicle Interior Air Temperature v. Elapsed Time

Elapsed time	Outside Air Temperature (F)					
	70	75	80	85	90	95
0 minutes	70	75	80	85	90	95
10 minutes	89	94	99	104	109	114
20 minutes	99	104	109	114	119	124
30 minutes	104	109	114	119	124	129
40 minutes	108	113	118	123	128	133
50 minutes	111	116	121	126	131	136
60 minutes	113	118	123	128	133	138
> 1 hour	115	120	125	130	135	140

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