



For most family dogs travelling is an exciting and often enjoyable experience. Dogs like to be included in whatever their family is doing and quickly learn that a car journey often leads to a walk. Unfortunately a few dogs find travelling very stressful because they feel frightened or travel sick. When taking any pet on longer journeys it is important that you are properly prepared.

What is needed to prepare for a journey?

If you take sensible precautions the chances of your dog becoming lost en route will be minimal but be prepared for any eventuality. Make sure that your dog is fitted with a collar and tag with your address and telephone number. A microchip implant is even more useful because it is a permanent form of identification. If the journey will be long, you may have your dog checked by your vet to ensure it is healthy before it travels. If your dog is unable to travel you will need to make alternative arrangements for it; you could arrange for your dog to stay with a friend or book it in at a boarding kennels or with a pet sitter.

Do we need to stop on the way?

Take plenty of fresh water, particularly when travelling in hot weather and make frequent stops to allow your dog to drink and exercise. If your journey is broken for any reason, make sure there is no risk of your dog overheating if left inside the car. Try not to leave your dog alone in the car, but if this is unavoidable leave the car out of direct sunlight and with all windows open. Never leave your dog unattended in the car for any length of time - remember a car on a hot day quickly becomes an oven. Some dogs are a little anxious when first travelling, but eventually the noise and motion of the car will calm them and most usually fall asleep. If your dog suffers from motion sickness do not feed it within about an hour of the start of the journey.

Where should my dog travel in the car?

Car Travel

Dogs may travel in the back seat of the car, the footwell on the passenger side in the front or most commonly, in the rear of a hatchback or estate car. Ideally travelling cages should be fixed in the rear of the car so that the rear door can be left open for ventilation when parked - without risk of your dog escaping. Be very careful when opening the car door during the journey in case your dog jumps out in excitement. Small dogs and puppies should be transported in pet carriers. Wire or plastic crates are the best transporting devices - these can be strapped to a seat or carried in the footwells. If your dog travels on the seat they should wear a safety harness which fixes to the car seat belts. This is not only for their protection but, in the event of an accident, reduces the risk of passengers being injured by the dog.

How do I arrange plane travel?

Air travel

Contact the airline well in advance to find out their rules for transporting dogs. Dogs usually have to travel in the cargo hold in specially designed travelling crates, although many airlines allow assistance dogs to travel with their handlers.

Make sure you arrive early for the flight as cargo is usually loaded first. The travelling box should be marked as containing a live animal with your contact details clearly displayed. Tape another piece of paper with these details to the inside of the box for extra safety. If your dog is going abroad contact your vet well before travelling to find out what vaccinations and health certificates it will need. It may take several months to complete necessary vaccinations, tests and paperwork before your dog is allowed to travel.

Should dogs be sedated for the journey?

If your dog is a nervous traveller it may be a good idea to ask your vet for a sedative before going on a long car journey. Your vet will want to examine your dog first and may prescribe a drug which you can administer yourself (although they may have quite unpredictable effects). If you are given a sedative it should be administered about half an hour before the journey and will last for up to eight hours. Do not sedate your dog before a flight because if it is drowsy it will not be able to adjust its posture for sudden movements and can be thrown around the box on a bumpy flight. There is some evidence that sedatives



can be dangerous for dogs travelling in the cargo hold.

What if my dog is travel sick?

For many people travelling is a major source of enjoyment, but for dog owners whose pets suffer from travel sickness, the freedom to travel can be substantially limited.

Travel Sickness is a common occurrence often affecting 1 in 6 dogs of all ages. The typical signs of travel sickness include vomiting, nausea, drooling, restlessness, anxiety and trembling.

However, travel sickness no longer needs to be a reason to leave your dog at home - the vomiting caused by this condition can now be easily prevented by medication provided by your vet. Ask your vet if this medication is suitable for your dog.

If you want any other information on health issues concerning your dog please contact Unicorn Vets on 023 8034 3434 and we will be happy to advise you.