

The warmer longer days of Spring and Summer are just around the corner. Many of us will soon be setting out on vacations to lands both near and far. And more than a few of us will have our pets in tow. Whether you'll be traveling by car, plane, boat, or train you'll want to consider the following:

- **Reservations**

Always to call ahead to be sure that the hotel, lodge, campground, or trailer park where you'll be staying is "pet friendly". If you'll be staying with friends or family, an advance call to be sure your pet is welcome might go a long way in preventing any ruffled feathers.
- **Transport carrier**

You should have a secure, sturdy carrier that has enough room for your pet to stand up and turn around. Holders for food and water are nice as well. This carrier will be your pet's "safe haven" during your trip so spend some time before your trip helping your pet get accustomed to the carrier. Put favorite toys and treats in the carrier to help him/her develop a sense of comfort and security while inside. Some airlines have specific requirements about pet carriers, so check this out well ahead of time.
- **Restraint devices**

If you take your pet out of the carrier in an unfamiliar area, be sure he/she is in a secure collar/harness equipped with a sturdy leash. Don't take a chance with this.
- **Vital pet information**

Keep a folder that contains documents such as vaccination history (traveling dogs and cats should always be current on their immunizations-if you're not sure, call your veterinarian's office), health certificates, copies of medical records if your pet has any ongoing health issue, and your veterinarian's phone number. This would also be a good place to keep any identification papers and a recent photo of your pet.
- **Food and Medicine**

Don't assume you can find the same brand of food when visiting an unfamiliar locale. If your pet is taking medications, be sure you have an adequate supply for the duration of your trip. Don't overlook monthly treatments such as flea control and heartworm preventative medications.
- **Identification.**

You need to be certain your pet is well identified. This is important even when your pet is not on vacation; but is critical when traveling. I recommend having your pet implanted with an identification microchip. The microchip, placed under the skin via a simple injection, is encoded with a number that can be read with a scanner used by many animal control services and veterinary hospitals. Talk with your veterinarian about this simple, safe, and reliable system. In addition to a microchip, I recommend that pets also have "tags" with important information that might help someone return your pet to you. If you'll be staying with friends or family at one location, you might want to have a separate set of tags made with information about where you can be contacted locally.

- Memories of home
Sometimes travel can be stressful for both people and animals. Be sure to pack that favorite toy, blanket or treat for your pet. This will help him/her through some of the inevitable rough spots on the trip.
- Sedation
While generally we do not recommend sedating your pet for travel, we do recognize that some pets become very anxious while “on the road”. This issue needs to be discussed with your pet’s doctor because sedative drugs, while sometimes necessary, are potent and need to be prescribed carefully.
- Health certificate
Most airlines require a valid health certificate for your traveling pet. This certificate, which documents the pet is not carrying any obvious infectious diseases, and is current on rabies vaccination, must be dated and signed by an accredited veterinarian on the day he /she performs a physical exam on your pet. There are special requirements for international travel, and travel to Hawaii.. You should allow several weeks to get all the paper work together when traveling overseas with an animal and several months if traveling to Hawaii.
- Consider *not* taking your pet with you.
Not all pets are cut out for travel. If you have some concerns about taking your pet with you, it might be better to look into one of the area kennels or pet-sitting services. If you have a trusted friend or neighbor, sometimes they will be willing to watch your pet as well. Usually some kind of safe and secure arrangements can be made for your pet.

Whether you’re trekking through Tibet or taking a day-trip to Tiburon, the needs of your pet during your trip will need to be addressed. A little planning and foresight will go a long way toward assuring a fun, safe, and relaxing experience, for both you and your pet.

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