



GENERAL SAFETY TIPS FOR TRAVELING WITH A PET IN A VEHICLE!

Traveling (even a short ride to one of the SPCA's locations) can be highly stressful, both for you and your pets. SPCA staff is there to help safely load and retrieve foster pets from your vehicle, but we can only help with one leg of the journey. If you're needing to take a car ride with your foster pets in tow, we have some tips to help ensure a safe and comfortable ride for everyone.

The first and foremost rule for all SPCA foster pets is that all cats and small pets must be in an appropriate pet carrier and all dogs must be on leash and collar for their safety so as to not get loose and potentially injured or missing.

BEFORE TRAVELING: DESENSITIZING THE PET TO A CRATE OR CARRIER

Being confined to a crate or carrier can be just as stressful to a pet as riding in a car, so being exposed to a crate or carrier before the weird box starts moving will help reduce a pet's fear. Make sure the crate/carrier is always left open and accessible in the foster pet's space. Adding cozy blankets and feeding treats or meals inside gives it a positive association. Allowing the pet to choose to go inside a crate/carrier will help make loading up for traveling much smoother and faster because starting off the trip by chasing around the room and forcing the pet into a small space is not fun for anyone.



CHOOSING THE BEST CRATE OR CARRIER

Plastic, wire, soft durable fabric? There are so many options to choose from! In general, the SPCA is limited by what is available for foster parents to borrow. Plastic and wire crates are preferred because they are easier to clean in case accidents occur during transport. Plus fabrics can snag and tear with sharp teeth and claws, making chances of surprise escapes higher. However, if you find that your foster pet prefers a crate or carrier setup over another, whatever is the most comfortable for them is the way to go. The only requirement is that it must be a true pet carrier/ crate that is well-ventilated for their safety.

Small pets and cats should not be transported in cardboard boxes because they can tear and chew through them quickly during transport. Aquariums for mice and hamsters are appropriate as long as tops are mesh and secure.

The size of a crate or carrier is determined by how large the pet is. The crate should be large enough for your pet to stand, sit, lie down and turn around in. SPCA staff is happy to trade out for larger sizes in the event the foster pet (s) have out grown the one they were sent home in.



SECURING FOR TRANSPORT

Give yourself plenty of time to load up a pet to make it on time to an appointment; rushing to get a pet into a carrier is how safety precautions get overlooked and put you and your foster (s) at risk. Check all the latches and the door of the carrier before transporting to make sure it's secure.

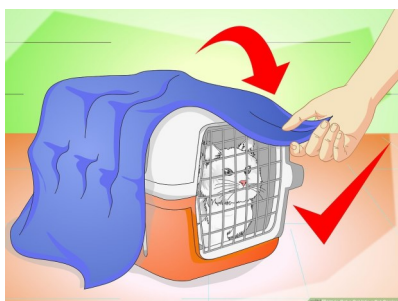
When picking up a carrier (that has a pet inside), it's always best to put one hand on the bottom to support the carrier during carrying. If a carrier is missing hardware, please notify the Foster Coordinator so the parts can be replaced or a new carrier can be provided.

Secure your pet's crate so it will not slide or shift in the event of an abrupt stop. To prevent shifting around, either place the carrier on the vehicle floor behind the front seats or use a seat belt to buckle in if a notch is provided.

Please note, not all carriers are appropriately rated for seat belts; a pet can become trapped or injured by a seatbelt in the event of a crash. When in doubt, place securely on the vehicle floor.



To Cover or Not to Cover?



If a pet is scared or stressed, partially covering a crate or carrier with a light blanket can help ease the stress of traveling. It is important to not fully cover to allow for ventilation.

When a pet is young and/ or the temperature is cold outside, covering the crate and carrier will help trap heat and regulate their body temperature.

If the pet has a fever or it is hot outside, do not cover with a blanket (even if scared) so they do not become overheated. Make sure there is adequate ventilation and the carrier is positioned near the air conditioning to help keep the pet cool while remaining secure.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS FOR CANINES

If you decide to forgo the crate for your adult dog foster, there are several safe alternatives to keep Fido secure and your eyes on the road. If getting tangled isn't a concern, keeping your dog in the back seat, buckled in and on a harness is a great way to keep your foster dog (s) secure. The SPCA does have a limited supply of harnesses with the seat belt buckle option (mostly for medium size dogs). Dogs can also be secured with a canine car hammock or with a barrier guard to the front. These are not routinely donated to the SPCA and are not currently available for fosters to borrow and must be purchased for personal use. Check out the supporting infographic page for more details on how to set these up!

While the above options are safe alternatives to crates, there are a couple of options that are not recommended by the SPCA for important safety reasons.

Don't let a dog ride in a truck bed.

An adult dog can easily jump out of an open truck bed and be severely injured if the vehicle is moving. No amount of 'training' will keep a dog from escaping if they are spooked by a loud noise or see a 'squirrel' that they want to chase. Puppies can and have been stolen when left in an unlocked vehicle or truck bed.

Do not leash your pet inside the truck bed — many dogs have been strangled when tossed or bumped over the side of the truck and been left helplessly dangling.

Open truck beds do not provide any protection from the weather. Hot sun can heat the metal floor of a truck bed enough to burn a pet's paw pads. A dog left sitting in the broiling sun without water or shade may suffer from heat stroke before long.

Keep head and paws inside the car at all times.

Although most dogs love to stick their heads out open windows, wind can seriously irritate mucous membranes and blow pieces of grit into their eyes.

Insects or flying debris can also lodge in the nasal passages or get sucked into the windpipe. It may require veterinary attention to remove the foreign material, which could cause permanent damage.

SOME QUICK TIPS

- Start with shorter car rides and build up: some pets get motion sickness.
- Don't feed whilst driving: feed your pet at least three hours before the trip to reduce the chances of an accident.
- Don't give them treats on the journey: your pet could choke if he/she eats on the move.
- Felines and small critters should remain inside carriers from the house to destination and should not be removed from the carrier at any point until safely inside a building. These pets can easily get spooked, slip out of your hands and become loose in a parking lot. Stray cats and kittens are found every year hit by cars, hiding inside car engines, and stuck inside other strange compartments - *all are extremely dangerous situations.*
- Never leave your animal alone in a parked vehicle. On a hot day, even with the windows open, a parked automobile can become a furnace in no time, and heatstroke can develop. In cold weather, a car can act as a refrigerator, holding in the cold and causing the animal to freeze to death.
- Never allow your pet to ride in the front passenger seat (especially one that is airbag equipped).
- Make sure your pet is secure and properly restrained before opening the door to the vehicle. Pets are at the highest risk of escaping and getting lost when entering or exiting a vehicle. Taking this extra step before exiting the vehicle will reduce the chances of a pet becoming loose in the parking lot.
- Waiting for a SPCA staff member (or medical staff if at an offsite vet) to come out and help collect the pet adds an extra set of hands available in the event of a crate or carrier malfunction.

Again, the SPCA can provide appropriate supplies for car travel and helping to secure pets prior to leaving the parking lot. If you are ever in doubt, always call the Foster Line at 919-630-9680 or email the Foster Coordinator at abroughton@spcawake.org for any questions or medical concerns related to car rides with your foster pet!

It's Hot Out!

Don't Leave Your Pet in the Car!

-  A car can overheat **even** when the window has been left cracked an inch or two.
-  Young, overweight or elderly animals, or those with short muzzles or thick or dark-colored coats are **most at risk** for overheating.
-  Shady spots offer **little** protection on hot days, and move with the sun.

90° Even if the temperature outside is only 70°, the inside of your car may be as much as 20 degrees hotter!

102° On an 85° day, it only takes ten minutes for the inside of your car to reach 102°.

120° Within just 30 minutes, the car's interior can climb from 85° to a scorching 120°.

 Many states and local governments have laws that prohibit leaving an animal unattended in a motor vehicle under dangerous conditions, which includes hot days. Your car could be damaged or you could be charged with a crime.

ASPCA

If you see an animal trapped in a car on a hot day, try to locate the owner or call 911! **Stay by the car until assistance arrives.**

