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TRAVEL TIPS KEEP PETS SAFE

More than two-thirds of pet owners will travel with their pets this year. Traveling with your pet, whether short or long distances, requires forethought and planning. AAHA offers tips to help you prepare your furry friend for a trip, whether you are traveling by plane or car.

"The best thing you can do prior to traveling with an animal is to see your veterinarian," says Dr. Link Welborn, AAHA president. "Your veterinarian can decide whether your pet will be able to withstand the strain of a trip and what kinds of precautions you will need to take before leaving."

If you are traveling by air, many airlines require that pets be examined by a veterinarian no more than ten days prior to the travel date. Airlines also require current health and rabies vaccine certificates. Make sure to check with your airline regarding their pet travel policies.

By understanding their options and taking a few precautions, owners can help make flying a safe and healthy experience for their pets. Owners should keep in mind that if their pet is small enough and can comfortably fit in an airline-approved carrier underneath the seat in front of them, the pet may travel in the passenger cabin. If you choose to check your pet as baggage, he should be exercised, placed in the cage with complete identification and a license tag, and picked up promptly upon arrival.

If you are traveling by car, make sure to take at least a few short rides with your pet prior to the big trip. This can help curb any nerves or agitation, and may lessen the effects of motion sickness. Buckling up is an important safety precaution for your pet. Restraints help protect pets in case of a collision and keep pets from escaping the car through an open window or door. Cats and smaller dogs are often most comfortable in pet carriers while traveling in a car.

While packing for your trip, remember to throw in a few of your pet's favorite toys, food and water bowls, a leash and food. Keep your pet on her regular feeding routine while traveling, and give your pet her main meal at the end of the day, or when you have reached your destination.

Remember that your veterinarian is a good source of information about your pet's travel needs. If an emergency occurs while you are traveling, you can call AAHA at 800/883-6301 or visit our hospital locator for names and phone numbers of AAHA veterinarians near you.

From "Pet Care Tips", Courtesy of the American Animal Hospital Association (www.healthypet.com)