

## Traveling With Your Pets

Does the thought of spending an hour trying to drive while Fluffy's yowling and Fido's jumping around like a maniac make you want to cancel your travel plans altogether? If so, read on. There are several things you can do to make that trip to Grandma's home for the holidays more pleasant.

1. Desensitize, Desensitize, Desensitize. Then desensitize some more. Pets often fear the unknown. It's up to us to make traveling a familiar part of their lives. Go slowly. Don't progress to the next step until your pet is comfortable with the previous one. The more often your pet is exposed to your vehicle, the calmer he will be.

Step 1: Find a suitably sized, secure, pet carrier, booster seat or pet seat belt. The carrier should not be so small that your pet is uncomfortable. Invest in high quality products.

Step 2: Leave your pet's carrier open during the day with a soft bed inside. Place near food and water in a quiet location. Every day, throw a small treat into the back of the carrier (start at the front and gradually move to the back if your pet won't go into the back of the carrier initially). This way, your pet starts to associate good things with the carrier and will become relaxed around it.

Step 3: Put your pet in their carrier or seatbelt, give them a few treats, then let them out.

Step 4: Obedience training for dogs. The more you train your dog, the more he or she will listen to you in general. Keep trying, keep training, keep getting help until you're seeing results. Nothing builds a stronger bond between you and your dog like lots of good, positive reinforcement obedience training.

Step 4: Sit in the car with your pet (always in their carrier or seat belt) for a few minutes each day. Then, take your pet back inside and give them a relaxing "massage". You can try using the scent of lavender or a DAP collar for dogs or feliway spray for cats. Lavender, DAP and Feliway (the latter two available at pet stores or through your veterinarian) all have a calming effect on many pets.

Once your pet seems comfortable with this step, progress to step 5.

Step 5: Step 4 + turn the car on daily.

Step 6: Go for a short drive around the block daily.

Step 7: Alternate between short and slightly longer drives. At this point, your pet is likely used to this part of their daily routine and no longer gets upset when in the car.

Notes: Approach all steps in a calm, assertive manner. The first few days (or even 1-2 weeks) may be tough, but if you're relaxed and following the rules, your pet will come around.

If your pet is not improving, has trouble with motion sickness or she seems absolutely panic stricken, please see your veterinarian. There are medications available that can help cure nausea/motion sickness and panic in pets. Pets with these disorders may not get better with behavior therapy alone. They need to have the underlying, physical cause for their distress addressed.