

Car Travel with Pets

Q. One of our new puppies has a drooling problem in the car which neither of her two brothers or one sister (who live locally) have the problem. We have tried ginger snaps which seemed to work a little until she refused to eat them. We have also tried ginger pills and melatonin - neither of which worked. Any suggestions?

A. Your puppy's salivation is probably due to nausea or "motion sickness". Car sickness is a common condition in puppies. A few preventive steps may help:

1. Do not feed dogs within 12 hours of car travel. Water may be offered up to the time of departure, and during rest stops. The transit time for food from ingestion to defecation is approximately 18 hours. Fasting pets prior to travel can avoid urination or defecation accidents in transit.
2. Condition the puppy to accept preparations for car travel. First, let the puppy be crated in the house. Go on with your other household business and come back to the puppy in 10-20 minutes. Reward him for good behavior. Do not proceed to other steps until the puppy is relaxed when crated.
3. Condition the puppy to accept being in the car while stationary. Next time carry the crated puppy out to the car. Place crate in the car, with windows open for ventilation, and leave puppy in the car for 10-20 minutes. The puppy needs to reach a point of comfort being out in the car, not frantic. If you need to sit in the car with your puppy, bring a magazine to read and keep your eyes off the puppy (as if you were driving). Reward him for good behavior, always ending the training session on a good note.
 - a. Condition the puppy to accept being in the car while moving. This should be on a new day, after the puppy has passed conditioning steps 1, 2 and 3, above. Take a short round trip drive with the puppy.

5. Place the crate, safety gate, or safety harness where the puppy can see out the windows, and perceive that the car is moving. The puppy needs to be able to see in the direction of travel, having both short and long distance views.
6. Provide good ventilation to the puppy when in the vehicle.
7. Provide good footing under the puppy's feet. The goal is to minimize unnecessary movement that would cause loss of balance, heighten anxiety, or cause fear.
8. Avoid load noises. Air conditioning may keep the interior quiet if your car is stuck in heavy traffic. Be tactful with music volume and selections.
9. Feed a diet of fresh, whole foods. Nutrition is intimately connected with behavior and puppies will not feel their best on a monotonous diet of commercial pet food.

William K. Kruesi, D.V.M.

Herbs for anxiety

For some individuals we use an herb tincture that we make at CRVC called "calming and relaxing drops". This is a blend of chamomile, valerian, skullcap and lemon balm. It works great for minor procedures such as toe nail trims, radiographs, car trips, or other events that may be too stimulating for dogs. We recommend administering it 20 minutes before a car, boat, or airplane trip for dogs that have a history of fear, anxiety or nausea during travel.

New at our Web site

See remarkable case studies at www.crvetcenter.com:

Allergies Arthritis Cancer Seizures...and more!

We're updating the site monthly with more information and links you can use.