



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

Getting Used to Cars

Whether it is trips to the park, the beach, a local café, the vet, groomer or a holiday destination, the family car is a vital element of you and your dog's everyday life.

A dog that only travels in the car if they're sick or if they have only experienced unpleasant things at the end of car trips (e.g. vet), or just generally feel sick travelling in the car, can often develop a negative association with cars.

Safety

In Queensland, it is illegal to travel with an unsecured load in your car, and this can mean your pets!

Make sure you contain your dogs in crates or secure them in doggy seatbelts.

Setting your Dog up for Successful Car Travel

- Make sure they are calm and have had an opportunity to go to the toilet
- Avoid feeding your dog before getting in the car
- Make sure your dog likes their car harness and has positive associations with being in the harness
- Make sure the harness fits well and the dog is secure in the car
- Make sure your dog has suitable air flow (this does not mean they need to hang their head out the window 😊)



Trouble shooting

My dog races back and forth in the backseat barking!

If your dog gets highly excitable in the car, sometimes restricting their view to the outside can help. We recommend crating your dog in the car and even covering the crate so they can't see out the windows. A crate has the added advantage of securing your dog, and eliminates the potential for car harnesses and tethers getting tangled. Refer to our info on crate training, as if your dog isn't used to a crate, it is best to teach them to love their crate outside of the car first! A product called a 'calming cap' can often help dogs who react explosively to visual stimulus. Also refer below for some products which may help.

Car Sickness and Anxiety

It is very common for young dogs and puppies to get sick in the car. Their sense of balance is not yet fully developed and the motion of the car can often cause them to feel sick. Excessive drooling can also be a common sign your dog is feeling a bit sick or stressed.



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Here are some tips:

- Opening the windows can help to balance the air pressure inside the car with the air pressure outside.
- Keep the car cool and well ventilated.
- Face a crate forward or secure a tether or car harness in the middle of the back seat so they can see ahead.
- Ginger - grated (small amounts) or a ginger biscuit.
- Herbal, homeopathic remedies and medications are available for pets with car sickness. Consult your veterinarian.
- Chewing can help so try offering a rawhide or dried chew such as a tendon or bully stick.
- Lavender essential oil on the collar or bedding can help to relax the dog.
- Techniques such as T Touch can often help to relax and calm dogs (ask us for more info!)
- Thundershirts can often help dogs travel better in cars.
- Adaptil (DAP) spray - a synthetic pheromone to assist in a variety of challenging situations for dogs.
- Through a Dogs Ear - For the Car - music designed to help relax and calm dogs in the car.
- Rescue Remedy drops.

Fear of the Car

If your dog already has a problem with the car such as fear or over arousal, following this procedure will help. Do not progress to the next step until the last one has been successfully completed on at least 5 different occasions. Trying to rush the program can send you backwards!

Step 1

Car = Good Things!

The car is stationary and not running during this stage of training.

To create a good association around the car for your dog, practise simple training exercises outside the car with the car door closed first. Reward with yummy treats when your dog is around the car.

Then, repeat the same but with the car door open.

The next steps are to place the treats on the back seat or floor of the car so your dog gradually has to move closer to and then eventually inside the car.

If your dog is already happy to jump in and out, or be lifted in and out, then repeat this frequently, giving lots of yummy treats.

Work up to securing your dog in the car in their harness or crate and feeding lots of yummy treats.

Step 2

Engine on = Good Things!

Once your dog is happy to be secured in the car, shut the door and turn the car engine on. Reward your dog with yummy treats! Then turn the engine off and allow your dog to exit the car.

Practice this lots of times.

Note: If your dog is unable to eat treats during this stage, it means they are too stressed! Go back and repeat stage 1 for at least 1 week.



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Step 3

Moving car = Good Things!

Repeat the above but start driving your car just a little down the driveway a couple of metres. Each time, reward your dog for remaining calm - even if you have to toss some treats into the backseat!

As long as your dog remains calm and settled, gradually increase the distance you move your car. Work up to short trips up and down the road just outside your house or around the block. Don't go for longer drives until your dog is calm and comfortable.

Dogs in Utes

Unfortunately thousands of dogs are injured each year in Queensland while travelling in the back of Ute's. Dogs can easily fall off and become strangled by their collars, or if not tied can fall off and get hit by another vehicle.

The safest option is to teach your dog to be in an enclosed and secured crate on the back of the Ute.

Covering the crate with a waterproof material can help keep your dog dry and also keep the sun off them.

Remember that dogs can still get very hot on the back of a Ute so don't leave your dogs unattended in the sun.

Handy Extra's

For some handy products for car travel with pets including no spill water bowls and car harnesses visit: <https://www.worldforpets.com.au/>

When you take your dog on outings or holidays in the car, don't forget the following:

Ensure your pet/s are identified with a collar and tag/s, plus microchip and your details are current

- Take a suitable collar and/or harness and lead
- Poo bags
- Water bowl and water
- Treats for rewarding good behaviour!

Of course, never, EVER leave your pet in a car unattended

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