

Have pets, will travel? Check out these tips on traveling with your furry friends

(BPT) - There's nothing like hitting the open road with your best friend, especially when they happen to have a furry face, four legs and a tail. While dogs and cats love being around their favorite humans 24-7, travel can be stressful for pets, especially if they're out of their routine and staying overnight in an unfamiliar place.



Before you pack, check out these useful tips from Dr. Rhonda Phillips, a longtime veterinarian and founding board member of Patriot PAWS Service Dogs, an organization committed to training and providing service dogs to American veterans at no cost.

Be health conscious: Social distancing also applies to pets! Humans may be able to transmit COVID-19 to pets through close direct contact, though most cats and dogs are non-symptomatic and cannot transmit it to humans or other animals. Limit non-family members from getting close to your pet's face, and instead have them show their love from six feet away.

Keep pets contained: When traveling by car, dogs need to be harnessed or leashed while cats need to be in a carrier to provide accident protection and keep them from jumping out. When staying in a pet-friendly hotel, bring a collapsible kennel or carrier to prevent pets from running out the door if a housekeeper walks in. This also ensures the safety of the housekeeping staff when you're not around.

Scope out pet-friendly stops: Do your research before you leave to find pet-friendly pit stops on your route. Pets need regular bathroom breaks and an opportunity to stretch their legs, just like humans. Confirm that any hotels you book are pet-friendly ahead of time to avoid surprises like extra fees.

Beat the heat: Never leave your pet in the car, even with the windows cracked! The temperature in your vehicle can rise almost 20 degrees in 10 minutes, and can continue to rise the longer you are away, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association. Heat strokes can be fatal to animals within minutes when there is no air movement inside.

Don't pack light: Bring your pet's own food, water (if possible) and toys when traveling, as the familiarity can help ease anxiety. Travel with an assortment of entertainment to keep your pet's mind busy. Catnip toys for cats, and tug toys, ice cubes or a frozen Kong with peanut butter inside for dogs are good ways to keep them from feeling bored or isolated during your trip. Additionally, make sure to pack a pet emergency kit filled with an adequate supply of any of your furry friend's medications, light bandage material, roll gauze, medical tape, topical triple antibiotic ointment and eye wash to be safe.

Have a check-in with your vet: If your travels take you and your pet across state lines, talk to your vet before you leave. Some states require a health certificate if you're visiting for more than 10 days. It's also a good idea to give them a call if your pet is prone to anxiety or nausea during travel so you can be prepared to offer relief to your four-legged friend when they need it.