

A Quick Guide to...canine travel sickness

Key information:

- Motion sickness in dogs is similar to what people can suffer from. It's a very unpleasant feeling, and can lead to a fear of car travel.
- Symptoms include: drooling, whining, barking, restlessness, panting, being sick, licking lips, yawning, swallowing repeatedly, shaking, weeing/ pooing.
- Warm conditions can make things worse – keep the car cool, and have fresh air flowing through the car. Put blinds/ shades on the windows.
- Young puppies are more likely to feel travel sick, because their ear structures and balance are still developing. Problems should subside when they are 1yr.
- Facing forwards in the car will help your dog – block the view of side windows.
- Walk them first so they are more likely to settle, and it gives them a chance to wee and poo first.
- It's best not to feed them before travelling – perhaps even 2-4 hours before.
- Be more aware than normal about good driving habits – take corners slowly, brake and accelerate smoothly, and go slower on small winding roads.

Reduce the fear

- If you can reduce your dog's fear of the car, it will help to ease their travel sickness. The more comfortable your dog is, the calmer they will be.
- To help them feel secure, experiment with the best position for your dog to travel in, and the best thing for them to rest on. This might be with them on the backseat in a harness that clips into the seatbelt. It might be in a fabric travel crate that you can put a blanket on to cut out some noise and light (the fabric ones make less noise). Some might be better in the boot of the car with a guard to stop them jumping into the backseat.
- To get over their fear of getting in the car, use treats and lots of praise to desensitise them. Do this before you need them to travel anywhere for real – build up journey time slowly.
- Some dogs improve with the use of a Thundershirt or bodywrap – it gives them the sensation of being held.
- Distraction can work well – talk to them, put the radio on (but not too loud); a passenger can stroke them if that will help them (rather than make it worse).
- Try to only do trips that have a positive outcome – a park, visiting friends etc.

Medication and supplements

- Anti-sickness medication can be useful initially, but it's still best to do some training so you won't have to continue using it.
- Anti-anxiety medication can help reduce a dog's fear of travelling – again this should only be used short term while the training plan is being put in place.
- Human medication shouldn't be used as there can be side-effects for dogs.
- Herbal treatments and flower remedies can be helpful for some dogs. You need to choose the right essential oils, as some can make things worse.
- Pheromone products like Adaptil can help some dogs to stay calm.