

# Car rides with your dog

■ BY HARRY KALAJIAN

There are many conflicting thoughts on this topic. I have many times seen dogs jumping from the back seat to the front. This is very dangerous for the driver and the dog on many different levels. Even if you have a little dog, do not let him sit on your lap when you are driving! It may feel good and your dog may show lots of enjoyment, but that is very dangerous. You as the owner know this already, but you still do it. One day, God forbid, you'll get into an accident, and whether it's your fault or not, you may end up losing your dog because of injuries, and you will be held responsible. Ask yourself: Is it worth it? No it's not. When you are driving, do you put your seat belt on? Well, a dog should also be restrained -- not in the front seat but the back for safety reasons. There are many types of dog restraints. Get one that makes sense to you and protects your dog. I have seen a person in a convertible with a lab that was running from left to right in the back seat. It would take two seconds for the dog to either fall out or jump out to go after a squirrel. I wonder what that driver was thinking! Would he let his child or grandchildren do that? No, I don't think so.

When driving, always restrain your dog. And even though Fido is restrained, do not have your windows completely open. An excited dog could try to jump out and find itself with its body dangling from the window. Have the window partly opened, just enough for the snout to stick out but not the entire head. When a dog sticks its head out, dust and debris can get into its eyes. I have read about dogs with small pieces of glass lodged in their eyes from just such an occurrence. And debris can be blinding if not fatal.

Never leave your dog unattended in the car, not even for one minute. It doesn't matter if it's in the shade or you have the air conditioner on. It's against the law, with a hefty fine or worse if your dog dies from overheating. Your dog can also become destructive and chew up your car or bark nonstop.

This topic doesn't pertain only to cars; the same goes for golf carts, boats, motorcycles or anything that moves. Each vehicle has its own set of dangers.

Also be aware that when you stop to get gas and Fido isn't under restraint, he may jump out at the same time you do and run into the street. Now you are in a pickle, chasing him through traffic, and he thinks it's a game until something bad happens to him or you.

Any restraints must be attached to a

collar or harness, never to a choker or pinch collar. The restraint must be adjusted to prevent the dog from getting his head out the window or reaching your middle console or the seat in front of him.

You might think that "my dog is good, and he just lies down." That's fine, but in an accident Fido will fly all over the car if unrestrained. Remember, even if your dog is great and just sits and looks out with the window open, it takes only one second for him to jump out and give chase. He's still an animal, and even if he's well trained, it will never be 100%. Even if you have worked with Fido for many years, at the end of the day he's still a dog and still has its natural instincts.

In Florida, dogs have a weakness toward lizards, bunnies, squirrels and other moving creatures that pump up

their prey drive (a natural instinct), and they give chase.

If your dog gets sick on drives, there are several things you can do, but treatment depends on the individual dog, and dogs get sick for many reasons. There is no one answer that's good for each dog. Ask your veterinarian or ask a professional trainer for guidance on how to cure it.

Always remember that in dog training, patience, persistence, consistency and repetition will be your keys to success.

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