

ROSPA

accidents don't have to happen

Carrying Pets in Vehicles Safely



Produced with the support
of the Department for
Transport

Carrying Pets in Vehicles Safely

Carrying pets safely

Carrying pets in vehicles safely during journeys is extremely important for avoiding collisions and keeping you and your pet safe. In a collision, an unrestrained pet could be seriously injured, or injure individuals in the vehicle. At 30 mph, for example, a 50lb (22.5 kg) border collie would be thrown forward with a force equivalent to almost nine 12 stone men.

Unrestrained pets can distract the driver, potentially causing a collision. Even pets that are normally well behaved could be frightened by something unusual and dive for the driver's feet or lap. If a collision occurs when a pet is in the vehicle and they are unrestrained, they could escape and be hit by another vehicle or cause another collision. Also, a defensive or distressed pet may make it difficult for individuals who are trying to help you after the collision.

Ensure that your pet is safely secured, using a seatbelt harness, a pet carrier, a dog cage, a dog guard or a suitable well-ventilated zip-up bag (in an emergency only). The most suitable restraint will depend on the safety and comfort needs of your pet.



Carrying Pets in Vehicles Safely

Transporting your pet

Regardless of how you decide to transport your pet, you should drive in a way that keeps you and your pet calm and safe. Avoid braking, accelerating and steering sharply, and ensure that you plan for some breaks if you are going to be travelling for a long time. In any case, a minimum break of at least 15 minutes after every two hours of driving is recommended.

Ensure your pet has used their litterbox/been outside recently to avoid any accidents during the journey. You should also avoid feeding your pet for several hours before the journey in order to reduce the chances of them becoming travel sick.



Failing to transport your pet safely could invalidate both your car and pet insurance if there is a collision.

Safety harnesses

For medium or large sized dogs, a safety harness that attaches to the seatbelt is the best option. It should go around your dog's chest, back and shoulders and be securely attached to the car seatbelt, which should be fastened.

When buying a harness, ask yourself the following questions:

- Can I use this harness in my vehicle?
- Is this harness suitable for my dog's size and weight?
- Does this harness fit my dog properly and comfortably (you should be able to fit two fingers between the harness and the dog)? Will they chew through it?

Harnesses should ideally have wide straps which will allow any forces to be distributed safely across your dog's body, particularly across the chest and shoulders. It is important to make sure that your dog cannot get entangled in the harness as this will be uncomfortable for the dog and could distract the driver.



Pet carriers

For smaller dogs, cats, and other pets, a pet carrier is a great option. The carrier must be the correct size and should be held firmly in place with a seatbelt or by wedging it firmly in the footwell.

Never put a carrier in the boot of a saloon car as your pet could suffocate, and avoid putting it unsecured in the boot of a hatchback or estate car, as the carrier will be thrown around in a crash.



Carrying Pets in Vehicles Safely

Some owners put self-scented material at the bottom of the carrier to help keep their pet calm. Blankets can also be added to make your pet feel more comfortable (particularly during cold weather).

Travel cage or crate

A travel cage or crate is suitable for dogs and larger animals. It is important to make sure it is the correct size for your pet: the pet must have enough space to lie down and manoeuvre comfortably. Leave plenty of space around the crate to allow for ventilation, and ensure it is secured with the seatbelt. In a hatchback or estate (not saloon) car, a cage can be attached to anchorage points in the boot.

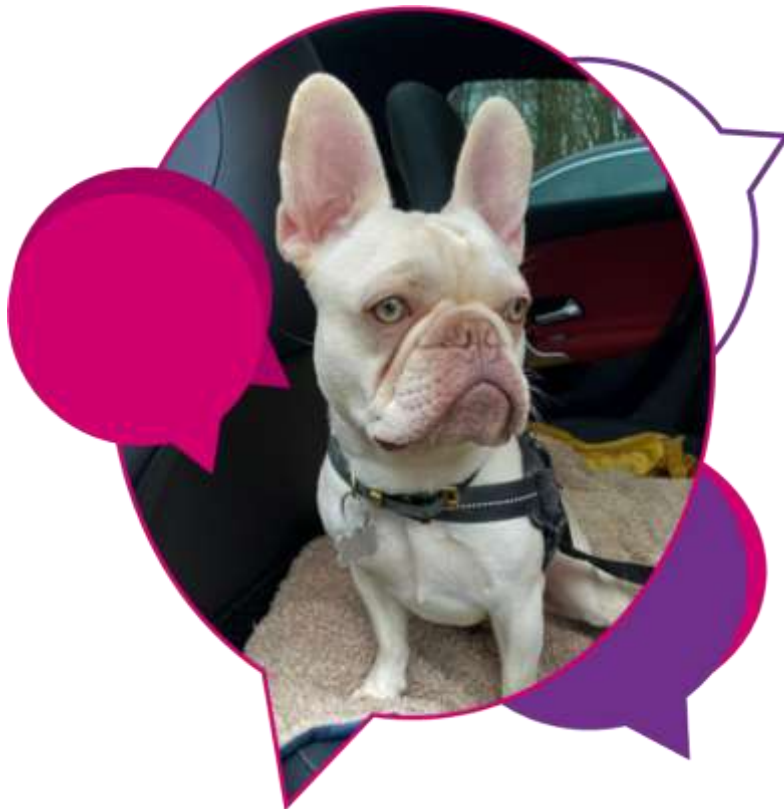
Dog guard

A dog guard, installed between the back of the car and the boot, will keep your dog away from the driver and passengers, but it will not protect them in a crash. For some vehicles, accessory kits are available to help build a dog guard.

Zip-up bag

In an emergency, such as taking a seriously ill or injured pet to the emergency vets, a zip-up shopping or sports bag can be used, as long as it is big enough to hold your pet comfortably and it allows your pet to get enough air. Ensure that you strap it in securely with the seatbelt.

There are many other options for carrying pets (particularly dogs) safely, including hammocks for the back seats of your vehicle and boot gates, so it is always best to research your options thoroughly and choose the method that most suits the needs of you, your vehicle and your pet.



Carrying Pets in Vehicles Safely



Transport in open vehicles

Transporting pets in an open vehicle can be very dangerous and should be avoided, as the pet is exposed directly to the outdoors at high speeds with lots of wind, meaning grit and debris could be blown into their eyes, nose, and throat. There is also a serious risk of them jumping or falling from the vehicle, or being hit by an oncoming object.

If you must use an open vehicle to transport your pet, put them in a cage that will protect them from the elements and prevent them from jumping or being thrown from the vehicle. Fasten the cage securely to the vehicle or secure it with a seat belt.

Getting your pet safely in and out of your vehicle

Most pets should be put in a carrier before you put them in the vehicle. If you are not placing your dog inside a carrier or they are too big for a carrier, keep them on a lead whilst they are getting in and out of the vehicle, and ensure that they use the door on the pavement side. Do not let your pet jump through the vehicle window.

If you are involved in a collision, do not let your pet out of their carrier or cage until they have calmed down and are in a safe environment. In a serious accident (or if you have any concerns) make sure to contact a vet.

Never leave your pet in alone in a vehicle, especially on a particularly hot or cold day. This can be fatal.

Other tips

- 🐾 Do not let your pet stick their head out of the window because grit and debris can get into their eyes, nose and throat, and they may fall out of the window or hit their head on a passing object
- 🐾 Make sure that your pet will not be struck by any airbags if they go off
- 🐾 Check that your pet is covered by insurance if they are hurt during a collision
- 🐾 Try taking your pet on short journeys before gradually building them up to longer trips to get them used to travelling in your vehicle, and ensure you start travelling with them from a young age
- 🐾 Consider getting travel training for your pet
- 🐾 Keep your vehicle well ventilated so your pet gets lots of air





accidents don't have to happen

RoSPA Head Office

28 Calthorpe Road
Birmingham
B15 1RP

t +44 (0)121 248 2000

RoSPA Scotland

43 Discovery Terrace
Livingstone House
Heriot-Watt University Research Park
Edinburgh
EH14 4AP

t +44 (0)131 449 9378/79

RoSPA Wales

2nd Floor
2 Cwrt-y-Parc
Parc Ty Glas
Cardiff Business Park
Llanishen
Cardiff
CF14 5GH

t +44 (0)2920 250600

General Enquiries

t +44 (0)121 248 2000

t +44 (0)121 248 2001

e help@rospa.com

t twitter.com/rospa

f facebook.com/rospa

in linkedin.com/rospa

www.rospa.com

Registered Charity No. 207823
VAT Registration No. 655 131649

