

Dog & cat rescue transports: Guidelines to make the journey a better one for all

First, we want to thank you for helping transport these dogs and cats from high-kill shelters and municipal/rural pounds to rescue groups who will work to ensure that they find fabulous forever homes.

That said, most transport coordinators will provide ample information and their own guidelines for transporting dogs. At a minimum, you will know the passengers and their approximate size, the originating shelter/group, the receiving rescue group, and contact information for the transport coordinator. Some other information you should definitely make sure you have once all transport legs have been filled includes:

- Key information for the persons doing the leg immediately preceding your leg and the leg subsequent to yours. This means name, cell phone number, vehicle description (color, make, model), and state license plate number. Don't forget to provide YOUR information as well.
- Meeting location: You will need to know where you will be meeting up with the person, including the area at that location. Hotels just off major thoroughfares make great meeting locations because there is normally good green space away from main entrances. This allows shaded areas to walk and water dogs as necessary.
- Make sure that the animals will all have collars and will be traveling with health certificates and rabies certificates (if old enough). Leashes are sometimes not provided, so make sure you have any extras you will need.
- Determine if any of the animals will be traveling in their own crates/carriers. If so, you'll need to make sure that all will fit into your vehicle.

Here are some additional considerations:

- Often, the sizes (weights) of the animals may be outdated. Especially with younger dogs, they may have grown MUCH LARGER. My own personal experience is to assume the animal is a bit bigger than you imagine. Descriptors like small, medium, and large are rather vague. Instead, ask for size descriptions that relate to a well-known breed. For example, "Jilly is standard Beagle size, whereas Johnson is around 75 lbs and the size of a typical German Shepherd."
- Crates, crates, crates. If at all possible, make sure that you have a crate or carrier for EVERY animal, AND make sure that all will fit into your vehicle. Bungee cords are really good to stack and anchor crates/carriers, with a towel or rubber-backed mat in between to make sure these don't slide around or topple over.
- Secure loose dogs. Sometimes, you may simply have to allow a dog to be uncrated in your car. However, be sure to leash the dog and attach the leash to something in the car to ensure the dog cannot bolt when you open the door.
- Be prepared for cleanup. Cover your car seats and cargo areas with something that will protect the areas from accidents (vomit, urine, and feces are not uncommon, especially in nervous dogs). Also bring a few plastic trash bags, paper towels, and wet-wipes in the event there is an accident. I also like to bring a stack of clean towels in the event that the dog does something in the crate. The dirty towel can be thrown into a plastic garbage bag, and a clean

towel can replace the soiled one in the carrier. The dirty items can be rinsed out and laundered once back home, and the garbage bags keep the items from stinking up the car interior.

- Bottled water and a bowl. You may need to give the animals some water to drink. Normally it is best to limit food and water in order to avoid crate/carrier messes, but on long journeys, the animals may need a drink. Besides, you may need the water for mess cleanup.
- Plastic bags for picking up after dogs. Used grocery store plastic bags work great for this. Large garbage bags are nice as a secondary disposal unit for the plastic bags with soiled content, especially if no trash receptacle is available at stops.
- **BE VERY CAREFUL WITH TRANSFERS.** It is heartbreaking when a transport dog bolts and runs off while on transport. Don't let it happen. Make sure that the dog is leashed and under the hand-off transporter's total control. Then take YOUR leash and double leash it before removing the other leash. If the leash comes with the dog, wonderful. One option is to put dog WITH leash into the crate, though some worry about the dog getting entangled or chewing the leash up out of boredom. Also, be sure you know if there are particular dogs that are strong and might bolt. Cats should travel in carriers with their litter boxes and then there is NEVER any reason to open the carriers.
- Disinfectant. I like to include a spray bottle of bleach water (approximately 1 part bleach to 20 parts water). I can use this to disinfect soiled crates. And in the case of puppies, you must always worry about the possibility of parvo virus or other contact-contagious diseases.

Remember to call the transport coordinator at each rendezvous, and definitely call if you are concerned or having any problems.

Transporting these animals is a great service, so enjoy the experience. The outlined suggestions above should ensure that the trip remains uneventful.

Thank you for playing a significant role in saving the lives of these dogs and cats!