

Car Nervousness

There are numerous reasons for animals disliking car travel, which include car sickness, instability whilst travelling, getting a mouth full of exhaust fumes from the tail pipe when previously asked to jump in the car, or making journeys without pleasant associations, such as trips to the vet for treatment. It's therefore not hard to see how animals come to see these metal boxes with wheels as having an unpleasant meaning. A positive association is required towards the car. This can be achieved in various ways with suggestions including games of retrieve, hunting out treats and toys from under, in and around all areas of the car with all doors open whilst parked on the drive is a good starting point. This should be a fun exciting event for your dog, with safe unrestricted access to the car.

Another suitable means of changing the association is by feeding regular meals beside or in the tailgate of the car whilst stationary. This provides good associations, but must be consistent, regular and not forced. For dogs with an established phobia of the car, you may have to begin some distance away from the vehicle. Short journeys of a few minutes ending in a free run at a park also build confidence. These can be just a few hundred yards to the pet's favourite exercise area, but again must be consistent and frequent to make a real impact upon changing the dog's behaviour. Travelling with a dog in the foot-well, in-between the legs of the passenger of the car provides stability and reduces the sensation of movement whilst travelling. It must be noted that cars with a passenger air bag, present a potential hazard for any dog carried in this manner, in the unfortunate event of an accident.

If motion sickness is the cause of the distress, talking with your vet about some of the herbal or proprietary branded products available may also help. There are a variety of old wives tales which have been known to have a good effect upon travel sickness including small amounts of ginger added to the food, alternatively a ginger biscuit to prevent nausea whilst travelling.

A crate in the rear of the car that is covered on three sides so the dog can only see out of the rear of the vehicle, reduces the sensation whilst travelling and can be used successfully in some cases.

Associating a dog whilst young to all types of transport, including cars, trains and buses builds the dog's confidence and helps prevent problems in later life. Safety is very important when travelling and it must be ensured that your dog wears a collar and identity disc. This helps with something to hold when getting the dog in and out of the car and is important for the dog's safety.

