

Traveling with Your Golden:**Tips for a Safe Trip***by Kathy Burton*

It's summer—time to head out for a fun road trip to visit faraway family and friends, take a weekend jaunt to the coast for some sun and surf, or just enjoy a day trip for some leisurely shopping and strolling. And as we all know, the cheerful Golden in your life would love to come with you! If you do plan on taking your dog along, be aware of these pointers and precautions before you load up and head off.

Label Your Dog

Make sure that your dog's collar is secure and that your phone number is securely fastened to it. If you're going to be stopping in many different places, it's a good idea keep a supply of paper-and-string key tags, so that you can write down the number of your hotel and other local information at each stop. If your Golden is a GRR dog, make sure he's wearing her GRR tag with our Hotline number. *If you've lost the tag, please take a minute now to call our Hotline and request a new one.* Be sure, too, to tell us if your contact information has changed.

In addition, have your dog microchipped before you leave town. Microchipping has become one of the most effective means of reuniting pets with their people, and even small-town shelters often now have scanners.

There are two types of microchips: one, sold by AVID®, is called a Friendchip (www.avidmicrochip.com); the other is sold by HomeAgain (www.homeagainid.com). Both brands can be read by most scanners, and even if the scanner isn't compatible with a specific brand, it will at least detect the presence of a chip. AVID is the more cross-compatible of the two systems—and its chip numbers are cross-referenced according to who purchased the chip (a vet clinic, for instance). This way, even if the owner has failed to

register with AVID, the chip number at least leads to the chipping entity, who might be able to ID the dog's owner. But of course, the best way to guarantee that a lost Golden gets back home is to REGISTER him with the company's recovery system. And if your dog was chipped when you adopted him, re-register him – to make sure the registration leads back to you and not to a former owner or a shelter.

When you register, give a phone number where you can always be reached. You'll be able to list your vet and another alternative contact, as well; if your dog is a GRR dog, you're welcome to list GRR (note the GRR number assigned to your pet and our Hotline number: 512-659-4653). Refer to the company's website for additional tips and information.

There's another benefit of chipping: it can help you if you ever have to prove that your Golden in fact belongs to you. Let's say two people show up at a shelter, both claiming a certain stray is theirs (a situation which has in fact happened). If the dog is chipped and registered, the rightful owner makes a phone call, shows a driver's license—and the dog goes home with his master.

Crate Your Dog

The Norman Rockwell picture of the family vacation is an enduring image: kids in the back seat, family dog with its head out the window. But though dogs do love to lean out into the open air, the habit can be dangerous: gravel, sand, bugs, even the wind can cause damage to sensitive ears and eyes. Sure, open the windows a bit so your buddy can get a good sniff in, but don't let him hang his head out the window or run loose in the car. And don't let him "ride shotgun" in the passenger seat up front—deploying air bags can seriously injure or kill a dog at impact speeds of less than 20 miles an hour.

The safest way for your dog to travel is in the back seat, in a securely fastened crate that allows him enough room to turn around. For travel, the plastic "airline" style is preferred, as it provides more protection in a collision and keeps your dog from turning into a fuzzy projectile. Always be sure the car's air conditioning is working efficiently where the crate is placed. To keep your pal perfectly comfy and lessen any risk of overheating, it's a good idea to invest in a crate fan, complete with a cooling unit, that you attach to the crate door (see Resources, at the end of this article).

If your car can't accommodate a crate, try a "dog seatbelt" (if your dog will sit calmly in the seat). Most dogs do very well with the seat belt system. In fact, I've transported many Golden Retrievers with this kind of restraint—which has the added benefit of keeping the dog from leaping out when you open the car door.

Exercise Your Dog

Just like us, dogs get pretty tired of sitting there and staring at the passing scenery. They need to be walked regularly and given a chance to eat and drink. Bring a long leash and make sure you control your dog completely at any stop. Some dogs get very stressed when away from home; they may bolt from the car or back out of a flat collar and go racing off at top speed. For safety, have your dog wear a martingale collar (also known as a greyhound collar) in addition to the flat type, riding higher on the neck above the flat collar. (The primary purpose of a flat collar is as a "holder" for ID tags. It's the canine version of a wallet—it tells who you are, where you live, whom to call in case of emergency.) The martingale has an extra fabric loop which enables the whole collar to decrease in size when the dog pulls, and it is virtually impossible to back right out of

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(leaving you with a leash, collar, and tags, but no dog at the end of it all). Make sure to fit the martingale properly, allowing just enough slack for it to go over the dog's head and NO more.

Leaving the Car? Take Your Dog

NEVER LEAVE A DOG UNATTENDED IN A CAR. NEVER, NEVER, EVER. In hot weather, a car is a large dog-oven, and even on chilly days, sun on the closed car can heat it to uncomfortable levels.

Leaving the windows open doesn't really help too much. In fact, it's an invitation for your dog to jump out and run away in a strange place, or for someone to reach in, unlock the door, and take her.

Hotel Manners

Always call ahead and verify that the hotel or motel takes dogs. When looking for pet-friendly accommodations, you can find help online; try www.travelpets.com, www.candlewoodsuites.com, www.takeyourpet.com, and www.allstays.com/Special/petfriendly.htm. Many establishments have specific pet

policies (a deposit, a surcharge for the room, etc.), and you should follow these to the letter. Don't ruin it for someone else traveling with pets by being a bad guest.

When you take your dog out for potty breaks, walk him away from the landscaped grassy areas in front of the hotel— and be sure to clean up after him. Don't let him bark, and don't leave him alone in the room— either take him with you when you go out, or stay in (dogs love room service!).

Take a First-Aid Kit

It's a good idea to have a pet medical supply kit with you when you travel. These come in many different styles, sizes, and prices; a Google search will pull up some good resources, and you can also put one together yourself. I suggest you purchase one with the basic supplies and then add some favorite items of your own; my "extras" include aloe vera gel, Bactine spray, eye wash, sterile nonadhesive pads, Ace athletic bandages (3 inches wide), Q-tips, Pepto Bismol tablets, Benadryl capsules for allergies, buffered aspirin, a

rectal thermometer, Ziplock bags, and a soft grooming-style muzzle. Don't forget any medications your dog is taking, and remember to keep up with routine cleaning of ears and eyes, even on vacation.

Finally, be sure to take copy of your dog's essential vet records, including a copy of his most recent rabies certificate. Take some recent photos of your dog to put in a folder along with the vet records.

A little planning and preparation will ensure a pleasant trip for both you and your dog!

RESOURCES

Medical Kits for Pets

www.cpr-savers.com/consumer

Auto Accessories

www.petedge.com

ProSelect® Crate Fan Cooling System (also at Petsmart), DC Car Adapter (powers ProSelect crate fans in any vehicle), Martingale No-Slip Collars (also at Petsmart), Guardian Gear Car Seat (hammock style seat cover), and Guardian Gear Car Harness

