



# Four Paws On The Road

Traveling and Camping with Companion Animals

By Jenn Gehr

In this new column, we will be covering many different pet-related tips and topics. Surely, there are a great number of campers out there who wouldn't even consider leaving home without their pet(s).

Nothing is more heartwarming than an exuberant puppy dog wiggle or purrrfect feline meeeowww greeting to make one feel right at home, especially when you're on the road!

When choosing to travel with pets, it's important to be aware of how your animal is coping with the many changes to their environment as well as what it takes to create a more pleasant experience for you, your pet and your camping neighbors. So, whether you are out on a weekend getaway or a full-time RV adventure (like me...5 years and counting!.) creating a peaceful living space on a day-to-day basis can only increase the quality of your life as well as the life of your pet.

## A Place of Their Own

When traveling with pets, it's important to help them feel as secure and safe as possible. Much of this added confidence comes from us and our willingness to make a few adjustments to accommodate the needs of our pets. Sometimes, this can be a challenge with miles of bumpy roads, unpredictable weather and the challenge of finding "break" locations. Just as their human counterparts enjoy familiar creature comforts, companion animals are the same.

Be sure you keep a special bed, blanket or crate in the same place when traveling and set up this area again once you have arrived at your camping destination to offer some sense of normal "pet space." This may mean that your dog has a bed or mat that is always traveling with you, so that no matter where you go, your pet can come along and have their own special space.

Our dogs love to be with us and the feeling is mutual. Keeping them near helps to ward off unwanted behavior such as barking, and keeps them well socialized with other pets, people, and places while allowing us to correct and praise with perfect timing for excellence in training. No matter how old your dog is, he can learn

new tricks! A soft, familiar smelling mat or blanket can easily be set up under your chair at a pet-friendly restaurant, beside you at the campground picnic table area, or at your campsite near your favorite reading chair to create that comfortable, familiar space.

Cats are connoisseurs of comfort and love chasing the sun's warm rays. It's seems no matter where I place a snugly bed for my cats, they always follow the sun. In an RV, the literal window of opportunity is a bit narrower than it can be found at home, but I have never seen a motorhome dashboard not occupied by the resident cat when given the chance. Be sure your finicky feline also has a favorite bed or perch to nap the days away in. Try sprinkling a dab of catnip here and there to help soothe a worried mind.

Just as we all need exercise to help maintain a healthy body and aid in restful sleep, so do our pets. Even though we are on the road sightseeing, bird watching or hiking, our critters need to play! Our animals will rest better and be more content when they are physically tired. So, be sure that before you leave camp for the day, you take your four-legged friend for a brisk jaunt in the great outdoors. Most cats can't join in on a heart-pounding hike or sniff-a-palooza around the park, but they can benefit from a few games with a laser pointer or old shoelace. That being said, I do have several RV friends who have patiently harness trained their cats to enjoy walks on a leash.

We are all in this together and I hope to hear from you – sharing your experiences, ideas and questions. Of course, our personal veterinarian's recommendations are the most important and from there, each of us have our own hows and whys of various ways of doing life on the road with Fido and Felix.

Have a question or want to share a tip?

Please drop us a note at [TBPets@equitylifestyle.com](mailto:TBPets@equitylifestyle.com)

*Jenn Swope-Gehr is now a full-time RVer whose life would not be complete without animals. A vet tech for nine years and a professional horse trainer, rider and instructor that still teaches national level clinics, Jenn's expertise with helping animal owners to better connect with their own dogs, cats, birds and horses have been a daily source of pleasure and passion. Jenn and her husband, Bill, travel the country year-round with their two Boston Bulldogs, Ginger and Brie.*