

ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

Car Sickness in Dogs and Cats

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Do you have to leave your beloved pet at home because you can't deal with the drooling and vomiting associated with every trip you take in the car? Are you afraid your pet is going to have a heart attack in the car because he gets so anxious? Well, then its time to do some work to make those car rides more fun for you and your pet!

No matter what your pet's reason for getting nervous or sick during car rides, the treatment is the same – make car rides a pleasant experience.

It is best to start car training when your pet is less than a year old, but training can begin at any age, it may just take longer for older pets to learn.

Step 1: Set your pet in the car for 5 minutes a day until he just gets bored with it. DO NOT start the motor or move the car, DO NOT touch or praise the pet unless he is lying down calmly. You may have to use food treats to tempt him into the car, or even get him close to the car at first.

Step 2: Bring some food or treats into the car and teach your pet to "sit" or "down, stay" when in the car.

Step 3: Increase the length of time your pet spends in the car, bring a book and just relax and read while your pet munches on his dinner or takes a nap.

Step 4: When he is completely calm, start the motor, but don't go anywhere.

Step 5: When the motor running has no effect on your pet, try backing out of the driveway or even going around the block. Have someone continue feeding your pet or stroking him as long as he is calm. If he gets excited, stop the car, but don't let him out until he behaves.

Step 6: Take your pet a short distance in the car like to the park, then take him for a walk.

Step 7: Gradually, take your pet for longer trips and gradually intersperse "boring" trips with "fun" trips.

Occasionally, you will have a pet that has true motion sickness. He enjoys car rides but still gets sick. You can give Dramamine to dogs (1 tablet for an 80-pound dog) or in some cases even Benadryl will work (one 25 mg tablet per 40#). If you still aren't having any

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luck, contact your veterinarian for tranquilizers to use at least for a while.

With time and patience, any pet can be taught to enjoy car rides. Remember, to take each step slowly. Do not praise the pet for behaving badly, even if you think you are calming him down or comforting him. Always reward good behavior with food and petting. Do not yell at your pet for vomiting in the car or for becoming over anxious because that will only reinforce his fears. Be sure to take your pet for frequent fun rides to the park or to a friend's house where he can play with another pet. If your only trip is once a year to the Veterinary Office, he will never associate car rides with good things. Make car rides fun!

If you have any questions or concerns, please call us at the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643. 🐾