

DOG 22

# Moving house and travelling with dogs



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## **Moving house and travelling with dogs**

**New situations and experiences can be stressful for the whole family – including your dog. It is important to plan ahead, to ensure your pet stays safe and settles quickly into new surroundings.**

## Moving house

Moving house can be a difficult time for you and your dog. Owners have many worries about how their companion will cope and how to ensure that their dog does not wander off and get lost in a new environment. If the new house is not far from the old one they may worry that somehow the dog will end up back at the old house! However, done carefully and with forethought, you can successfully relocate your dog with minimum stress.

### Safety first

The days leading up to and immediately after your move can be stressful for everyone in the household including your dog. For you, it means disruption while everything is located, packed up or thrown out. For your dog, it usually means normal routine goes out of the window in addition to the general disruption. All your dog has known and become familiar with, in terms of household objects and smells, changes dramatically and it is not surprising that some dogs become stressed.

You may wish to consider placing your dog in a boarding kennel for the duration of the move, which has the advantage of keeping your pet safe and stress-free while allowing you to attend to the details of the move. Once safely ensconced in your new home, with everything unpacked and order restored, collect your dog and dedicate the time needed to settle your dog into the new

environment. Do not forget, if you intend boarding your dog, vaccinations and worming will need to be up to date – allow for this when planning your move.

Should you decide, however, to keep your dog with you, there are a number of things you can do to facilitate a smooth transition during the period of the move.

Put the dog in one room with all doors and windows closed early on the day of the move, so that you know your dog is safe and can be found when it is time to go. Do not forget to let the removals staff know which room the dog is in. Remember, not everyone will be as fond of your dog as you are. Feed your dog as normal, but not too close to moving time in case of illness during the journey. (See the later section – Travelling with your dog.)

One member of the family should be solely responsible for your dog on the day of the move. This way, you always have a point of reference and know that the nominated person knows where your dog is. If possible, keep the dog on a lead or in a secure dog cage if you have one.

On arrival at your new home, ensure your dog is kept secure until one room in the new house is sorted out, some familiar belongings installed (such as bed and toys), and water provided. Ensure that the doors and windows of this room are kept closed and lock

the door if possible as this will help you remember your dog is inside and prevent others from opening the door accidentally. Alternatively a large sign stuck to the door may help.

You can then get on with moving everything into and around the house knowing your dog is secure. Provide a meal and, if your dog is cold, a hot water bottle wrapped in a blanket, towel or jumper which smells of you or your old house to make your animal feel secure.

Hopefully, you will have familiarised yourself with the areas around your new home where you can exercise your dog. Having been constrained for what could be a considerable period of time, your dog may well appreciate and benefit from a period of free exercise.

At the end of the day, when the house is organised, let your dog out to explore the new environment a little (make sure all the doors are closed and the garden is secure). It is usually best to accompany your dog during this initial exploration, so that the animal is not overwhelmed and you know exactly where they are.

### **Helping your dog settle in**

Make your dog feel at home by helping to furnish the new house with the animal's scent. Obviously none of these smells will be present in the new house and there will be various alien smells, which may make your dog feel insecure.



You can help by taking a soft cotton cloth and rubbing it gently around the dog's face to pick up the "personal scent profile". Dab this around at dog height in the room(s) where your dog will initially be kept (or have access) so that your pet begins to feel at home and bond to the territory. Repeat this daily and build up the scent within the house.

There are also manufactured scents available which work in the same way – ask your veterinary practice for details. If you have an appropriately sized dog cage, use this to good effect by letting the dog sleep in it for the first few nights, surrounded by familiar items, one of which could be an old jumper that smells of you.

Use food and a regular routine to help your dog settle in. Small frequent meals will give you more contact initially and help to reassure your dog that all is well. By knowing when and where feeding will take place, the dog can anticipate the meal rather than worry about it. This allows your pet to relax and promotes a feeling of well-being.



## Letting your dog go outside

Unlike cats, there is no need to keep your dog indoors for several days before letting out to bond with the new home and learn the new geography and smells. The key to successfully integrating with new surroundings is to:

- ensure the dog is always accompanied by a responsible person and, certainly for the first few days, is always exercised on a lead. If you want to let your dog have more freedom, then purchase an extendable lead which offers a good compromise between restraint and free exercise.
- make sure your dog has some form of identification. A collar and tag with name, address and contact phone number should be worn at all times – a legal requirement. You are well advised to have your dog microchipped – your vet can

advise you. If you choose to have your dog “chipped” remember to inform the company that holds your dog’s data of any change of address and/ or phone number.

- accompany your dog as much as possible to begin with until confidence is built up. Dogs, like people, are all different. Less confident dogs may take some time to adapt to the new environment. At the other extreme, your dog may take the move comfortably, and adapt to new surroundings without any problems.



## Preventing dogs from returning to their old home

If your new home is only a few streets or just a couple of miles from the old one, your dog may encounter old routes while exploring the area, and return "home" to the previous house along these routes. There is less likelihood of this happening with a dog than a cat, but it can happen. It may be that the bond with the new home is simply not yet well enough established to break habits. It is wise to warn the new residents that this may happen if you are not moving far and to ensure they do not encourage the dog to stay. Rather, ask them to call you so that you can go and collect the animal but, if the behaviour persists there are some things you can try.

- Feed small frequent meals and give lots of attention to build up the bond between you. Establish routines and signals concerning food and feeding time which your dog cannot resist.

- When exercising your dog, make an extra special effort to maximise the time spent playing
- Groom your dog at home and whilst out exercising

What you are trying to achieve is to get the dog to associate pleasurable experiences with new surroundings. This way, your dog is far less likely to roam.

If your dog does go missing, notify the new owners of your old home immediately and inform the local authority (normally the dog warden), police station, veterinary practices and any rescue or welfare facilities.

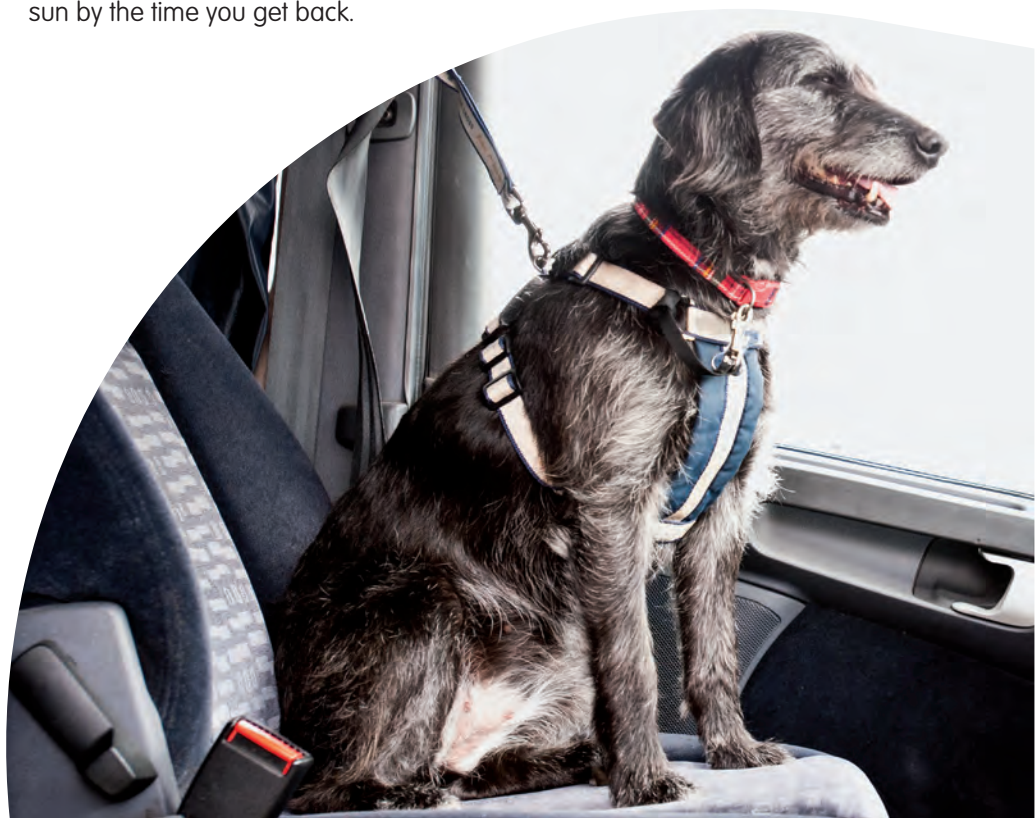
Assuming your dog has proper identification (collar, tag and ideally a microchip), there is every chance of being reunited sooner rather than later.

## Travelling with your dog

- Transport your dog safely – in a secure and properly constructed cage (if possible). Secure the cage in the luggage compartment if you are travelling in an estate car.
- If it is not possible or practical to have a cage and the dog has to travel loose, then either secure the dog on the back seat with a purpose-made seatbelt/harness, or behind a fitted dog guard in the space to the rear of the back seat, if in an estate or hatchback. Remember, your dog should be able to stand up, sit and lie down in comfort.



- Never transport your dog in the boot, loose in the front foot well of the car or in the removal van
- On a long journey it is wise to stop and offer your dog water or a chance to exercise
- If it is a hot day make sure the car is well ventilated and NEVER leave the dog inside a hot car if you stop for a break
- If a short stop is unavoidable, always leave the car in the shade with the windows partly open but be aware how quickly it can heat up if the sun is on it. Do not forget, the sun's position changes throughout the day and what was shade an hour ago may be in full sun by the time you get back.
- Ensure your dog is wearing a collar and tag containing the details of both your new and old addresses and contact numbers
- Make sure your dog is healthy before you travel. You may wish to consider sedating your dog if the journey is expected to be long or your dog is a poor traveller. If in doubt, seek advice from your vet at the earliest opportunity.
- Feed your dog as far in advance of travel as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to wait until you arrive at your destination.



# Happy, healthy pets

**Blue Cross** advice leaflets are packed full of top tips to help owners with their pet questions. They cover a wide range of topics, from training a puppy to caring for an older cat. So if you need some support to help you with a pet problem, whether it's about a dog or a degu, we're here for you.

You can read and download our leaflets online at [www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)

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## Blue Cross

Blue Cross has been dedicated to the health and happiness of pets since 1897. Abandoned or unwanted, ill or injured – we do what's needed to give every pet a healthy life in a happy home. We're a charity, so the more help you give us, the more help we can give pets.

## How you can help

Blue Cross doesn't receive any government funding, so we rely on the generosity of pet lovers like you. There are lots of ways you can help the sick, injured and abandoned pets in our care, like making a donation, fundraising for us or leaving us a legacy.

**Please call us on 0300 777 1897 or visit [www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)**



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