

Leipper Management Group

To enable and facilitate the human potential to produce goods and services that will improve the quality of life

Furry and Feathered Traveling Companions

TCL

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Education, management and information services especially for small businesses and associations

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I. Introduction

My experience in traveling with pets starts when my family moved from San Diego California to College Station Texas in 1949. The family included a cat Susie who was the first child in the family. Somehow along the way Susie got loose and was lost. After desperate attempts to find her we had to continue on to Texas. A few weeks after settling in, a box arrived at my Dad's office on the weekend. When he arrived on Monday it was discovered that in the box was Susie, a bit bedraggled and hungry but in amazingly good shape. Some very kind person had found her and sent her to Texas. She continued to be a very special member of our family until she died at age 17. Since that first trip, pets of one sort or another have been my most frequent traveling companions. Most trips have been by car, although other modes of travel have been attempted on occasion.

II. Chickens, turtles, dogs, and other assorted vacationers

By the late 1950's my family consisted of four children myself included, and a wide variety of pets. One of our most eventful trips occurred during this time. It was our version of Noah's Ark. We took off from our home in College Station Texas in our station wagon and drove to Dallas to put my Dad on a plane for a business trip. We continued from there to Kingman Arizona to visit an Aunt and Uncle. Along for the ride in addition to the four kids, my parents, and a family friend, were a dog, at least two turtles, a rat or two, and a chicken. The chicken was the result of a school project. She grew up not realizing she was a chicken.

This was in the days before good air conditioning in cars became an almost standard feature. To keep the chicken and rats cool we placed a towel over their pens and kept ice on the towel.

The night before we put my Dad on the plane we stayed at a nearby motel. I'm not sure what my parents told the motel management about pets but it probably wasn't very specific. The chicken, Henny Penny, was installed in the bathroom. She immediately took up residence on the top of the toilet next to the sink. One of my favorite memories is waking up the next morning and seeing that chicken sitting on the top of the toilet talking to my Dad while he shaved. Thank goodness she was a hen so she didn't crow (too much) and wake up all the neighbors.

III. Lessons learned from a special dog

The first dog I had after striking out on my own was a very unique and special mutt. I was traveling a lot during his youth so he grew up in the car. Until his death at age 13 the car was his primary territory and security blanket. Geneses went on Girl Scout campouts, he traveled to Mexico, he flew in airplanes, he went cross country skiing, and he even

went on canoe rides. His impeccable manners and easy going temperament made him very easy to travel with.

It was with this dog that I realized the importance of being sure he had a collar on at all times and that he had his current rabies tag and an identification tag. Since I often traveled by myself I also carried a note in my wallet of who to contact to take care of my dog in case of an emergency or situation where I was not able to look after him. My current dog Elvira, is a retired racing greyhound adopted from a rescue organization in Pennsylvania. She came with multiple methods of identification. She is tattooed, a chip was implanted under her skin and she has the usual tags. All identifications are registered with the proper organizations so that if anything happens, hopefully she can be more easily identified and the proper contacts can be speedily made.

Geneses was a dog of well defined habits. One of these showed up on the first or second camping trip with him. When dinner time came I put his kibble in a bowl and set in on the ground beside the car. The next thing I knew he was taking each individual kibble and burying it in a different place all around the campsite. From then on I fed him in the car and everything was fine.

Geneses spent much of his youth in California so his dinner time became established on a California daylight savings clock. I discovered this on a trip to Texas. I was wondering why he didn't want dinner at five o'clock. Two hours later he was ready to eat. He was the same way about bedtime. No matter where we traveled I adjusted his dinner time and bed time to a California schedule. He also grew up thinking a sleeping bag was my only bed. This too proved to be advantageous. No matter where I was or what time it was, when Geneses determined it was time for bed he would fidget and fuss wanting to go "home". All I had to do was put my sleeping bag in a corner, not even rolled out, and he would settle down and go to sleep. Although many animals may not be as rigid in schedules as this dog, it is important for your pet to maintain a schedule while traveling that is close to the regular schedule he has at home. This can reduce stress and provide a reassuring element for your pet.

Somewhere in southern Utah, I found a great place to camp and set up my tent for the night then took my dog for a walk. My closest neighbors were a family with young children. The next morning when I woke up I noticed a paper plate on my camp table with a big bone on it. A note on the plate said, "We thought your dog would like this bone." Although I was a little leery not knowing for sure where the bone came from I was pretty sure what my dog would do so I let him have it. Sure enough, he took the bone and immediately buried it in some nice secure place. After an incident in my neighborhood at home with someone poisoning dogs, I am extremely cautious with my own animals. When traveling things are even more uncertain. As a good rule of thumb it is best not to let your pet chew or eat anything other than what you have brought with you. This includes squirrels or other such things they might catch or find dead as well as garbage or tidbits found

around a campsite. There are health concerns other than poisoning that can cause problems for your pet.

One Christmas my sister and I were planning to drive to our parent's home in Monterey, CA from Reno. My sister had brought some home-made jerky with her and inadvertently left it on the table when we went to run some errands. We came home, realized the jerky was missing, assumed the dog had gotten into it and didn't think much else about it. We packed up and headed west on I-80. Near Truckee, CA we got stopped on the freeway. The snow had apparently caused some accidents. All of a sudden Geneses had to get out of the car, now! He had to pee and almost melted all the snow in the center divider by the time he was finished. After eating that jerky he must have drunk a lot of water and even though he had gone out before we left home, his tanks were still pretty full.

IV. Wings and things

Off and on over the years I have transported various birds (other than chickens) from one place to another. Once, on a trip from Kingman AZ to Monterey CA I was bringing two parakeets home to my sister. They were in a small cardboard box in the back seat. I was taking the scenic route and there were many curves in the road going through the hills. Every time I went around a corner I could hear those birds sliding across the box then scampering to get back in place. The mental picture of those dignified birds trying to sit sedately in one place and finding themselves sliding across the floor caused me a few chuckles but it also made me aware of the need for birds to have a perch even when they travel.

When my sister moved to Susanville CA her cockatiel went with her. We had the bird's cage right behind the front seat where we could keep an eye on him. My dog was also ensconced behind the seat where he had a perfect head rest on the back of the folded up seat. All the bird could see of the dog was the end of his nose. The bird wasn't at all happy about that nose. He continued to hiss at that nose until we rearranged the covering on his cage so he couldn't see it anymore. The rest of the trip went peacefully.

A trip to Texas in 1985 included a visit to the ranch of a friend who was a veterinarian. One result of this visit was that my sister ended up with a parakeet. On the trip back to Reno The parakeets cage was secured to the top of the water cooler behind the drivers seat. This provided a greatly appreciated entertainment source for my cat Zinc who was on his maiden voyage and only a few months old at the time. Although he never attempted to get his paws in the cage he sure enjoyed watching the bird or sitting with his nose right up to the bars. The parakeet took the attitude of not acknowledging the cats existence.

Birds can be especially susceptible to drafts and temperature changes so it is important to place them away from windows and cover

their cage, at least partially. The covered cage also makes them a little more secure.

V. Cats coming and going

When my family moved from Texas back to California we had three cats and some turtles. The cats were loose in the car and often got under the seats. One cat though, like to sit on the dashboard on the drivers side. Careful attention was required getting in and out of the car to make sure the cats stayed in. At night it was often quite a procedure getting them out of the car and into the motel room.

When I got my own cat in 1985 not only did I get him used to a collar and leash, I bought him a kennel box which goes everywhere with him. His box is his bedroom at home and his security on the road. Cats and dogs in particular like their own private "den". Traveling with your animals in a kennel carrier provides them with a safe, familiar place to feel secure. A kennel also provides safety in the car. If they are in their box they won't get under your foot on the gas pedal or jump in your face if they get startled. With my cat, it is far more secure to transfer him from the car to the house, or motel, or trailer if he is in his kennel. If the worst happens and you get into an accident the kennel can provide protection which can minimize the injury. There are a variety of other restraints that work well, especially for dogs. A little research on your part will determine what is best your pet and your circumstances.

The biggest problem I have with Zinc is not letting him know we are going somewhere till I am ready to put him in his box and put him in the car. If he gets suspicious he is under the bed or in some other inaccessible place in a flash. Unlike dogs who will usually do their business if you let them out or take them on a walk, you can't tell a cat to take one more potty break before leaving home. What has worked for me is to load up and start down the road. Then after approximately twenty to forty-five minutes we stop and let Zinc use the litter box if he wants. Having a trailer or other type of RV is especially beneficial when traveling with cats. Their litter box can be all set up and becomes familiar to them after a few trips. Most cats have very little problem using their litter box in an RV. I have on occasion had a litter box in the back of the car and had no problem with Zinc using it when needed. Your cat will usually tell you whether he approves of the accommodations or not and there is a good possibility you will pay for not listening to his preferences. One of Zinc's favorite places to visit is Lake Lahonton. It is like one big litter box to him. He loves building huge pyramids to mark where he has done his business.

Zinc is very good about going on walks on a leash although he does have a tendency to stop suddenly, or change directions and dash off in a hurry. For these reasons I have found out it is not a good idea to day dream or enjoy the scenery while taking the cat for a walk unless I want to risk tripping over something or stepping on his toes.

Zinc is now fifteen years old and has traveled all his life. Although he has been tent camping, the trailer is his preferred second home. No matter where we are as long as we have the trailer he is home and totally content. I am aware that some people leave their pets in their trailers while traveling. I prefer that my pets are in the car with me. This allows me to more closely monitor what is going on. I can determine whether we need to make a pit stop, whether the temperature needs to be adjusted, or whether they just need some reassurance.

VI. Home away from home

Tortoises carry their own home with them but sometimes circumstances require a little more speed than their normal mode of transportation. My two tortoises were adopted through the Reno Tur-toise Club, the designated representatives in Northern Nevada for desert tortoises. As a protected species they have adoption papers and are tagged. Their identification numbers are on file with the club as well as with my veterinarian. Traveling with endangered or protected species of animals presents a different set of considerations. In many cases there are restrictions regarding taking the animal across state lines. There may be other rules, regulations, and laws that apply specifically to these animals so it is extremely important to become familiar with those that pertain to your pet. Inattention may lead to your pet being confiscated, despite proper identification. The U.S. Fish and Game is one agency you might want to contact. Your veterinarian can help you with other resources.

I normally only take my torts on camping trips within my home state of Nevada. They have their own kennel box as well as a completely enclosed wire box with a secure latch. I make up some of their favorite salad before leaving home. This usually lasts for several days. During the day the torts spend time in their wire box in constant view from wherever I may be. Much of their day though, is spent in supervised walks in areas I have deemed safe from vehicular traffic as well as other hazards. I get my exercise in watching them take a tour of the area and going after them when they start to get too far off. In the evening I put them in their kennel and put them in the trailer. They also enjoy walking around in the trailer trying to find a cubby hole. On occasions Grinch (the male) has startled the dog during her nap, by walking up and checking out her feet or some other accessible body part.

Although my tortoises have adapted to travel well, they eat normally and process their food normally, a little more attention must be given to their care. As with all cold blooded reptiles temperature and other environmental factors are more of a concern. Their eating habits and general health are more affected by changes in environment. For these and other reasons, including regulatory issues, my torts stay home if at all possible. Unlike dogs and cats, your reptilian pets don't tend to pout when you leave them home or board them with your vet or other care giver.

VII. More than just another suitcase

Traveling with your pet(s) can be a most rewarding and enjoyable experience but it requires thought, planning, and commitment. Your pet will be an integral part of the traveling experience and of any activities planned. Considerations for your pets best interest must be the priority. Pets cannot be expected to be treated as part-time companion, ready for a romp on the beach but left alone for long periods while you tour museums, go on a shopping spree, or visit where pets aren't allowed.

Thought - The type of trip, mode of transportation, destination, activities planned, other people involved, and numerous other factors should be considered when planning a trip with your pet. For instance if you a driving to Disneyland and plan spend all day in the park, it would probably be best to leave your pet at home. Leaving your pet in an RV or a motel room all day is not in the best interest of the pet.

Some species of animals are more sensitive to changes in humidity, altitude, heat and cold, and other environmental factors. Some individual animals, just like people, travel better than others. Young animals, cats and dogs in particular, may need more frequent stops. Their first few trips will be learning experiences, so more patience and persistence may be required to instill the rules and provide the reassurance needed to establish an enjoyable travel experience for you and your pet.

Traveling with pets outside the country is a whole other matter in itself. Serious thought need to be given to the advisability of taking your pet into other countries. There are regulations, customs, cultural differences, and health issues which can vary greatly from country to country. When I traveled to Mexico with my dog in the late seventies I had contacted the US Customs office in San Francisco, obtained information from Triple A, and talked with my veterinarian. I made sure my dog had all the proper documentation before we left home.

Air travel requires some special considerations. As soon as you begin making your plans contact the airline on which you will be traveling. Find out about their requirements for animals. A few things to keep in mind:

If at all possible take a direct flight. Direct flights are usually shorter and the risks involved with transfers or changes are minimized.

Find out ahead of time where your pet will be unloaded when you arrive at your destination and get there as soon as possible.

Travel with your pet by air only when the weather is moderate, not during the middle of summer or winter. Temperature extremes can be intensified during air travel and traveling to a destination that is hotter or colder than home in a short period of time can be more stressful on your pet.

Be sure your pet has water.

As soon as possible after arriving at your destination find a place to give your pet a chance to get out and stretch, take a potty break, and get a drink of water.

My greyhound flew from Pennsylvania to Las Vegas when I adopted her. The adoption group would only send her on a direct flight. They called the night before she was to arrive to make sure I knew what time she would get in, where to go to pick her up and that I had all the proper information. I made sure I was at the air cargo building at least an hour before she arrived. When she arrived I noticed that the rescue organization had put a teddy bear in her kennel to comfort her on her travels.

A. Planning

When considering a trip with your pet do some research first. In the last few years traveling with pets has become more common and a lot easier. There are motels, resorts, and even restaurants that cater to people and their pets. Some attractions and other places to visit are beginning to have nearby daycare available for pets. There is a lot of information and numerous resources out there to help you plan for your pet. Check out what is available at your destination. Find out about the regulations in parks, on trails, in campsites, and at various points of interest or places to visit. Talk with your veterinarian about any concerns you might have regarding your pet's health or documentation you might need. Take a first aid kit for your pet. Plan for alternatives such as choosing a second place to stay if your first choice doesn't work out.

B. Commitment

When you got your pet you assumed the responsibility to take care of it and provide it with a safe and healthy environment. Traveling with your pet is an extension of this responsibility. Even with careful planning situations may occur where you might have to give up or cut short some part of your itinerary because of the needs of your pet.

A few years ago my brother and I went to our first international trailer rally in Idaho. The rally was held in July and although we were prepared for hot temperatures, it was even hotter than expected. Most days it was in the mid to high 90's and there were no trees to park under. I would take the dog out for a long walk early in the morning and not again till the sun was going down so that she wouldn't have to go during the hottest part of the day. We had the windows shaded and a fan going in the trailer which helped cool things a little. I wetted both the dog and cat with water if they seemed to be getting too hot. I could also put a damp towel on the dog. I made sure the both had plenty of water to drink. I chose to stay with my pets rather than attend many of the events and activities of the rally. The events were located at a different site and required a bus or car ride. I did not feel at all comfortable leaving my animals for several hours with the temperatures that high. If I had felt that either animal was in jeopardy of developing heat related

problems we would have left the rally site, either for a nearby place where we could hook up and turn on the air conditioner, or we would have headed home.

One summer vacation my brother and I took with the trailer included a stop in Eugene Oregon to pick up my sister's kids who were five and seven years old at the time. The dog and cat were also along for the ride. This trip presented new challenges to me. Having young children as well as animals encouraged me to clarify priorities when it came to setting up camp for the evening. What worked out best was to get the kids out of the car and let them run around the campsite while I got the cat transferred to the trailer, the dog put on her chain, and gave both of them a full bowl of water. Then my brother and I could take care of any needs of the kids. After the kids were settled then either my brother or I would take the dog on a walk.

VIII. Manners, etiquette, and common courtesy

Just because you know you have the perfect, most obedient, and well trained pet doesn't necessarily mean that everyone will agree with you. If your trip includes visits to relatives or friends be sure to find out ahead of time if your pets will be truly welcome. Don't make assumptions. Your dog may be allowed on the furniture at home, but at Aunt Bessies? Just because Aunt Bessies dog sits on the couch does not necessarily mean your dog is welcome to sit on the couch. Be honest about your pets habits, phobias, and sensitive areas. You may have learned to tune out your dogs constant barking but what about the people in the adjacent camp site? Big dogs often make people nervous just because of their size. You and your pet will be more welcome guests don't impose your pet on others even if they don't specifically object and if you adhere to the principles of basic common courtesy.

A. Training can be invaluable

An animal that responds to commands can make the difference between an enjoyable trip and potential disaster. If you are not comfortable with doing the training yourself, find out about classes you can attend. And yes, cats can be trained. I knew I would be traveling with my cat when I got him so when he was little he started wearing a collar and progressed up to a harness. He wears his harness with tags every time we travel and he is very comfortable walking on a leash. In fact, after going on a walk he comes in the door and stops, waiting for you to take off the leash or harness. You have to be especially careful with cats with any kind collar or harness to make sure they can't slip out of it. Definitely try out the collar you intend to use at home to make sure it fits properly and that the cat cannot get out of it. I like the type of harness that buckles around the neck and is attached to a separate belt that goes around the belly and buckles. This allows me to adjust each part separately and also provides a reasonable back up if one part comes undone.

Training to visual as well as vocal commands can be extremely helpful. I learned this by accident when I was on the beach with my dog. He couldn't hear me but when he saw my hand movements he knew I meant for him to come. Visual commands also came in handy when he was older and lost his hearing. If he could see me, he knew what I wanted.

In public places whether required or not, it is a good idea to keep you pet on a leash or long lead. You may have complete control of your pet but what about other people, children in particular, who may not use appropriate caution when around a strange animal? What about other animals that may not be in control of their owner? Then there are unexpected circumstances that can come up suddenly which could possibly startle your pet into reacting out of character. You may be risking your pets safety both in terms of physical well being and in terms of liability perceived by other people.

All pet owners have a responsibility to each other whether traveling or taking a ride closer to home. If you fudge on the rules, for instance taking your dog disguised in a shopping bag into a restaurant where dogs are not allowed, you jeopardize the respect for all pet owners not to mention that you are violating the health regulations of the establishment. This is especially true when it comes to cleaning up after your pet. In any public area always clean up after your pet and dispose of it in an appropriate manner. Inconsiderate behavior on the part of pet owners is the primary reason for restrictions placed on pets. When you don't clean up after your pet, allow it to be a nuisance to others, or take advantage of the generosity of pet supporters, not only will you and your pet not be welcome the door could become closed even well to behaved pets and responsible pet owners.

My first dog grew up taking pit stops in weeds and other uncultivated areas. He got to the point that unless it was an emergency he refused to use a lawn of any sort. Although this was really nice in many ways it caused some difficulty when, for example I was visiting a friend in San Francisco. It was pretty hard to find a weed patch in downtown San Francisco.

IX. Tips to consider

So you plan to share your travels with your pet. Here is a review of some issues to keep in mind that will make your trips enjoyable for you, your pet, and other people you may encounter along the way.

A. Start young

If at all possible take short trips with your pet when they are young. Get them used to a collar or harness and a leash. Get them familiar with their kennel.

If you plan on leaving your pet at home anytime during it's life while you travel, get them familiar with the methods you plan to use. Take them to the "babysitter" overnight. Have your neighbor come over while

you are home and visit with your pet. Check out pet sitting services, have them come for a visit. After deciding on one, utilize their services while you are gone on an overnight trip. The more familiar your pet becomes with travel or home care arrangements while it is young the less traumatic it will be as it gets older. It will also provide you with more flexibility.

B. Health and Safety

Put together a first aid kit for your pet to carry with you on trips. Familiarize your pet with any safety precautions such as a kennel, seat belt or other option. Be sure to consult with your veterinarian if there are any special health concerns related to the proposed trip. Some areas of the country can expose your pet to fleas and ticks that carry diseases so get informed and be prepared. If your pet has any health problems such as diabetes or if your pet is older, make sure you are prepared to provide the additional care the condition requires and to handle any emergencies.

C. Be prepared for the weather conditions

If traveling by car in the summer take all necessary precautions to make sure your pet will not get overheated. There should always be a supply of fresh water readily available. Never, ever, under any circumstances leave your pet in the car. When traveling in the winter have an extra blanket, or possibly a sweater, for your dog or cat. Be careful with your dogs feet. Cold and snow can cause the pads to crack and bleed.

My second dog had terminal cancer when she went on her last trip. We were driving to Canada with the trailer. She had recently finished chemotherapy and her health was stable. After consulting with my veterinarian and receiving his OK, I decided to take her. She had no problems on the trip and did not suffer any effects of the disease. She died about two months after coming home. The fond memories I have of that last trip provide me with happy thoughts and minimize the focus on her illness.

D. Documentation

I have a notebook that contains all permanent information on my pets. It goes on every trip the animals go on. Information for your own notebook should include:

copies of any adoption papers

current shot records

last vet visit reports

contact information on the organizations with whom you pet is registered

any special certification that may be required

information on any medical problems, medications or special dietary needs

current picture of the animals (very helpful if your pet is lost or you need verification of identity)

X. Happy Trails

The pets we bring into our lives become special companions and fill their own unique niche. Taking them on trips adds a whole different dimension to your adventures. The additional planning and preparation, the occasional limitations are overshadowed by enjoyment of having your pets with you. As long as your pet enjoys traveling and is happy and healthy, you should be able to share many adventures together.

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Notes

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