



Purely Dogs

Travel Tips

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Lindsay Brooks of Lenhartsville, Pennsylvania has taught her German wirehaired pointer Colbie to wait in his crate and not exit until leashed.



Chuck Soroka of Sugar Notch, Pennsylvania gives water to his Brittany Wyatt – Dogs should learn to take water from a squirt bottle to “make” them stay hydrated – of course Wyatt would rather be “drinking in” bird scent.

PRODUCTS AND TIPS TO AVOID HAZARDS DURING UPLAND HUNTING TRIPS



In the light of day, I realized that the ivy lining the hotel parking lot was ivy all right, poison ivy. I figured I'd be showing the telltale bumps along my wrist within a matter of hours, since the dogs had been walking through it and I'd been lifting them in and out of their crates.

There were other hazards around the parking lot that I hadn't seen the previous evening when I'd arrived after dark. Whoever mowed the lawn hadn't taken time to remove trash before cutting, and the grassy area was littered with the shards of aluminum cans and glass bottles. Luckily, none of the dogs had cut a paw during their potty breaks in the dark.

Now I had a few things to add to the list of items needed for road trips with dogs.

HEADLAMP

If you told average people that you were willing to drive 12 hours, heck, sometimes two days, to hunt a smallish, hard-to-find, hard-to-hit bird called a ruffed grouse, they'd just shake their heads.

Chances are, you'll be driving a distance for your grouse hunt and traveling with your hunting dogs. It's likely that you may be stopping to gas up, take a break or stay overnight sometime during your travels; and with the days growing shorter as winter comes, one of those stops may be after dark. Rest areas, convenience stores, hotels – even the best places may be carelessly mowed, with trash and debris just cut up along with the grass.

Using a headlamp when letting the dogs have a walk break will make you more visible to others, but the biggest benefit is that it will illuminate potential hazards such as broken glass or even discarded, rotten food or an oil-slicked parking lot puddle. Your dog's location will be more visible to you, and others, if you also buckle on one of the lighted collars that are available.

Before you go, practice having your dog whoa or stay inside the crate when its door is opened, so that he/she learns to whoa or stay until you clip on the leash. After a stint in the vehicle, your dog may be too eager to get outside for his break; training him to wait for the leash will add an element of safety.

WIPES (old towels, baby wipes, chamois)

Another thing that happened at the previously-mentioned hotel stop is that in a matter of a few seconds, one of my dogs dropped and rolled on a pancaked, dried, furred item that may have been a groundhog at one time. He was very pleased with himself; I found the stench unbearable. In that case, the hotel management was kind enough to provide a hose, and it took several wash and rinse cycles before he could be put back in his crate.

You may not be at a hotel, or a stop with a handy hose to use when your dog steps in or rolls in something that stinks. Or, you may just want to clean off wet and muddy paws before reloading the dog. Some sort of wipe, whether it's an old towel or chamois, is handy to have.

Bob West takes things a lot further when re-crating a dog that's been out for hunting or work in the field. He calls it his "tail gate check" and it's a head-to-toe once-over of the dog. As he goes over the dog, he's checking for foreign matter such as grass awns, and looking for cuts, abrasions or any evidence of soreness in the joints.

Bob also advises that after the dog has been out for work and re-crated, the owner check it again after a half hour or so. If the dog is feeling any soreness or has been injured, that's when it will show up. Also, allowing the dog to loosen up a bit helps it recover and be ready for the next day.

PURINA FORTIFLORA

When I traveled to hunt with my dogs last year, my older dog knew the drill - duffels and guns packed, the atmosphere of excitement - and got caught up in it. It seemed that for those two days, he ran on adrenaline, with his pulse and respiration rate elevated for hours.

His digestive system was a wreck. He'd eaten little, and the atmosphere of the hunting trip had created stress for him. Fortiflora, a powder that is a live active culture of probiotics, was the answer. Not only did it help his digestive upset, adding the palatable powder to his food seemed to encourage him to chow.

But he lost a couple days of hunting, and he's 12 . . . we both hate for him to lose an hour of hunting! Now I know better. I start adding the FortiFlora preventatively, before leaving for the trip.

Brian Zanghi, a research nutritionist for Nestle Purina said that although poor gut health can be caused by illness, it can also happen as a result of the stress and excitement of traveling. If the dog's gut health is compromised, a bout of diarrhea can lead to dehydration – and definitely impact the dog's ability to hunt.

SQUIRT BOTTLE

We've all learned about dehydration, and heard the advice - don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. That's because by the time you feel thirsty, you're already dehydrated.

The same is true with dogs. Yet, while we're traveling, they may show disinterest in getting a drink. I offer water, either after the walk or with a crate pail, but I also make the dogs drink during a break by using a squirt bottle.

As an aid to hydration, while on the road, Bob likes to "float food" or, in other words, add enough water to the dog's dry food so that it floats. Do everything you can to make sure the dog is getting plenty of water and is fully hydrated, he said.



CANINE INFLUENZA

Okay, you're thinking, that's all pretty easy. I'll make up a kit with the headlamp, wiping cloth, FortiFlora and squirt bottle. There are so many hazards; but we can prepare for most troubles.

But what about this new strain of canine influenza? Do we need to be concerned about that as we travel? After an initial outbreak in the Chicago area of the H3N2 flu, cases have been confirmed in Alabama, California, Texas, Massachusetts, New York, Wisconsin, Michigan, New Jersey, Iowa and Indiana.

According to Cornell University Vet School, it is the young, old, and ill dogs which are most vulnerable to get the flu and deteriorate into advanced problems such as pneumonia. The symptoms are a cough, runny nose, sneezing and a fever. It's spread dog-to-dog by coughing and sneezing; to date, there is no evidence that it can be spread dog-to-human. There is also no vaccine for the H3N2 strain.

The American Veterinary Medical Association describes symptoms for a mild case: moist cough (sounds like kennel cough) that persists for 10 to 30 days, lethargy, reduced appetite, fever, sneezing and a discharge from the eyes and/or nose. Dogs should be seen by a veterinarian because they may need supportive treatment such as an antibiotic for a secondary bacterial infection, a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory to reduce fever or administration of fluids if the dog is becoming dehydrated.



What should you do while you're traveling? Definitely prevent your dog from coming in direct contact with other, unknown dogs, and keep your dog from coming into contact with animal saliva, urine, feces or blood. In other words, stay away from the obvious "community" trees, posts or bushes that are invitations to the sniff and lifted leg. Certainly it's impossible to avoid every area that another dog has used for a potty break, but you can do your best to limit your dog's exposure to places where an infected dog may have been. 🐾