

Transporting Dogs

By Linda Kieres

So you've finally reached the point that the dogs won't fit in the back seat of the SUV any more! What to do?

If you are contemplating moving up to a bona fide dog truck or trailer, there are a few essential features you need to consider.

First and foremost – ventilation!!!! I don't care what part of the country you live in – your dog carrier MUST have a fan. You don't want to know the statistics of the number of dogs that have died after being left in the vehicle for only a short time (you were just going to run in and grab lunch). It can heat up incredibly fast, especially if you have several dogs inside.

So a fan on a thermostat is – as they say in the commercials “PRICELESS.” Consider having a spare battery hard-wired directly to your vehicle so it recharges as you drive. You won't have to worry about the battery running down over night and the fan stop working.

The divider panels should not be solid; you need to assure adequate cross ventilation. If you use “jail bars” or other similar material, make sure the dogs cannot get to each other through the bars though. The space between the bars should be no more than 1 inch. Also make sure the roof and walls (front and back) are fully insulated as well. After all – the whole idea is to keep your buddies as comfortable as possible, both winter and summer.

And the next consideration is – SECURITY. Dogs (even without thumbs) can be little Houdini's and can jimmy a lock quicker'n you can say “Jiminy Cricket.” So, no matter what kind of latch you use (I prefer the kind that have a bar that latches both at the top and the bottom), a secondary safety latch [hook or snap] is a good idea. There are also unscrupulous folks out there that are more than happy to relieve you of your priceless gundog(s). So locks on all the doors are a must.

If you are considering a trailer, check out how it rides. It should be built solid enough [and balanced] so that it doesn't “bounce” as you drive down the highway. How annoying would that be to the dogs – to be jiggled half to death [barf]? Not to mention the safety risk of the trailer bouncing and wandering and/or sliding on ice, this could cause an accident.

The ease of traveling with the “gang” can be increased exponentially when you have an adequate carrier. There are all types of vehicles available on the commercial market, or you can have something custom made to fit your particular needs. You can go for just the stripped down basics or something that would rival any motor home for amenities. Either way, it is WELL worth the investment.