



HOLIDAY TRAVEL, GUESTS and YOUR PETS



- ❖ Aunt Alice is a doll -- but leaves her purse on the floor with sugar free gum in it (has Xylitol)
- ❖ Cousin Chris is cool -- but has 7 different meds in his suitcase in the spare bedroom
- ❖ Neighbor Ned is super nice – but likes to sneak a sip of egg nog or wine to the dog

Do you have an Alice, Chris or Ned?

Do they stop by your house or come stay for the holidays?

Do you travel to visit them?

Holiday travel and guests are wonderful, a chance to catch up with relatives, friends and neighbors!

At the same time, those heartwarming visits have hidden risks for your pets. For instance:

- Suitcases, backpacks & purses hide meds, sugar-free gum, candy and other bad-for-Fido-and-Fluffy things
- Visitors may think it's cute or 'nice' to slip candy, food, treats and even drinks to Fido and Fluffy
- Fido and Fluffy may be shy/scared of your guests or just don't get along with them -- especially if brother-in-law Bob insists on roughhousing with Fido or niece Nellie insists on getting in Fluffy's face
- Fido and Fluffy may be freaked out by the change in their pack, their schedule or their space
- Guests may bring their own pets – which means even bigger adjustments for your furballs

Wow.

The bottom line is that for your pets, the holidays may mean travel, visitors and overnight guests that can be a lot of fun but also cause a lot of stress and upset.

Here are a few things to consider and do when you're having visitors, OR if you're traveling yourself!



Missouri German Shepherd Rescue (MoGS)
Doggie Health & Wellness Team
Wellness Wednesday Series on Canine Health

1. **ROUTINE** Dogs and cats thrive on routine. Guests or travel upset that routine in many ways.

- Suddenly your pet's pack is bigger and s/he isn't sure what to make of it
- Their sensory and auditory world just changed and it can upset many pets
- Pets who are easy-going or goofy may not care, but most others do react to the changes in some way
- Meal times or bed times may be way off
- Nephew Jared sits in Fido's favorite chair
- Fluffy's litter box has been moved to the basement and she isn't used to it/doesn't like it
- Aunt Helen and Uncle Glen are staying in a room where your pet normally catches a nap
- Your pet may be confused, upset or both
- Even worse – your pet may wander in and help themselves to 'goodies' in suitcases and bags. Medications, candy, holiday goodies, sugar-free gum – all are dangerous to pets



2. **STEALTH PETS** Do you have one of these?

- Can Fido and Fluffy move like lightning and get into things before you know it?
- Can Fido open doors or nose up the lids of suitcases?
- DO keep room doors firmly closed when rooms with luggage or gifts are empty
- DO keep a special eye on your pet at all times to know where s/he is
- DO eyeball guest areas daily to be sure things Fido or Fluffy could get into are put up/away
- DO check BATHROOMS constantly – extra guests means toiletries and medications left on almost every surface!
- EXAMPLE: A MOGS volunteer (MOGS-ter) had a dog who routinely unzipped her backpack!

3. **CREATE A "LUGGAGE RULE"** The goal – be sure there's nothing your pet can get into, from meds to gifts

- Have guests zip all luggage when they're out of their room
- have guests unpack and put away, in a closet or drawer, anything Fido or Fluffy can get into (small chewable items, medications, toiletries, food items, gifts)
- If Aunt Mildred doesn't want Fluffy to take a cat nap on her best mohair sweater, remind her of the rule: do NOT leave your things out!
- If you guests don't want that beautiful wrapping nibbled on or that ribbon destroyed, put gifts up

4. **GIVE YOUR PET A SAFE PLACE TO ESCAPE** Be sure Fido and Fluffy have a place to get away if needed

- A kennel or crate that's safely tucked away from the noise and chaos, possibly in your room
- Put their favorite bed, toys, blanket, etc in that area
- Be sure all possible toxins (meds, cleansers, etc) and chewables are out of reach
- Keep soothing classical music on at low volume to calm their nerves, or try a TV



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5. **IF YOU'RE TAKING YOUR PET WITH YOU** You need to do some some prep work!

- Traveling by air:
 - Check with your vet in case calming meds are needed and to get required paperwork
 - Be sure the crate is big enough and secure enough for your pet to be comfortable
 - Check FREQUENTLY with the airline!
 - Be there the very minute the plane lands – and immediately check your pet for dehydration, excessive stress reactions, etc
- Traveling by car:
 - Carry a copy of shot records, vet number, microchip number & a few good pictures in your car
 - Post a notice in your lower windshield “Pet On Board” with a good picture to alert rescuers
 - Put a small packet of vital info about your pet in the glove box: your complete contact info, shot records, microchip number, rabies tag number, a good picture or two, a description of size/markings/color/breed/age/shy vs. friendly/any suggestions on how to best approach/etc. CLEARLY LABEL it as “Fido – young neutered male German Shepherd, black-and-tan”
 - Feeding is different for every pet. Experts suggest feeding 3 hours before getting in the car, then feed a few snacks along the way at rest stops. Be careful about feeding in the car, as some pets get motion-sickness on longer journeys
 - Take:
 - An extra collar and leash in case the first ones are lost or damaged/chewed
 - Travel-friendly water and food dishes
 - Bottled water (water in different towns can be different and affect your pet’s system)
 - An extra sheet or two to cover bedspreads in hotels or homes you’re staying in
 - Several towels to wipe off paws or dry off your pet
 - Their kennel or crate. It can be their ‘escape’ or safe spot if they’re getting stressed out
 - If they don’t normally use that kennel/crate, start getting them used to it several weeks beforehand



**Be a great guest.
Help your visitors be great guests.
Be a great pet parent.
Travel- and guest-proof your pet!**