

# Distracted Driving and other pet travelling considerations

So your pet likes being in the vehicle with you? Not a surprise really, because they like spending time with you in general! Here are some precautions to consider:

## 1. Distracted Driving

Alberta and other jurisdictions have put distracted driving laws in effect that cover not only the most common occurrences of distracted driving (e.g. cellphone usage), but can also apply to free-roaming pets in vehicles.

From the Alberta Transportation website: <http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/distracteddriving>:

*The most frequently asked question regarding the Distracted Driving law is whether pets are specifically addressed by the law. Here's the answer! In situations where the driver becomes too involved with their pet, police could reasonably argue that the distraction is comparable to the specifically banned activities of reading, writing and grooming and lay a charge. Also, the Traffic Safety Act allows police to charge a driver who permits anything, including a pet, to occupy the front seat of the vehicle such that it interferes with the driver's access to the vehicle controls and the safe operation of the vehicle.*

*If a driver violates a distracted driving provision and an existing provision in the Traffic Safety Act it would be up to the discretion of the officer as to if one or both charges would apply. For the safety of both pets and road users, it is best if pets are secured in an appropriate pet carrier.*

Cats in particular prefer the safety of their own home, and will seek out hiding places, such as under your feet. In this situation your feet should be busy operating foot pedals! The interference of a pet poses a major safety hazard to both pet and owner.

## 2. Your Pet's Safety

Too often veterinary clinics see dogs come in with injuries or illness related to travel. Here are some of the most common reported examples:

- Driving with the dog's head out of the vehicle window: They look like they are really enjoying it; however, ear and eye injuries/infections are all too common. At minimum, the dog should be wearing goggles. Furthermore, dogs should not be left unsecured in a moving vehicle. Consider pulling over for a pit stop to allow your dog to hang his head out the window and experience the sights and smells.
- Dog in the flatbed of a truck: Many veterinarians have seen cases where the pet had travelled many times in the back of a truck without incident. However, the urge to jump could overcome the comfort of the ride at any time.
- Car collision: Pets sustain multiple injuries if you have to make a sudden stop and/or are involved in a collision. Pets should be in travel kennels that are secured in the seat belt or should be wearing a seat-belt harness.
- Hyperthermia: What will you do with your pet when you are stopping at an attraction while travelling? In order to prevent your pet from suffering from heat stroke, plan ahead. In the summer you cannot leave your pet in a vehicle. This could potentially be fatal. Make your pledge at [www.nohotpets.ca](http://www.nohotpets.ca) or #nohotpets.

