

# TRAVELING WITH YOUR DOG

## (Originally 'Westies on the Move')

NOTE: This article was written for the Westie Club Website; however, the principles can apply to all breeds. Please substitute your dog's name for "Westie" when reading this material. Article written by Beth Widdows

We are a very mobile society. And often, when we travel, so do our pets. This document is intended to help you plan your travels with your Westie so that they will be safe and trouble free. Information provided is intended to educate you and to help you to think about the safety and well being of your pets as you (and they) move into new situations. There may be some advice with which you disagree. You might have choices to make. We hope this will allow you to make those choices based on facts and information.

### OVERALL TRAVEL NEEDS

#### IDENTIFICATION

Nothing can be more important than proper identification. If you are separated from your dog, this may be your only hope of getting it back.

- **MICROCHIPPING/TATOOING**

This is something that you should do whether you travel or not. So many things can happen to separate your dog from it's identification tags. Microchips and Tattoos ARE ALWAYS THERE. The cost is relatively low, especially if you watch for a microchipping fair.

- **DOG TAGS**

Your basic dog tag should allow a finder to contact you by phone. But what if you are not at home? You might be vacationing in another state. If they call your home number, who will answer the phone?

ADD ANOTHER TAG!! You can buy, for a small price, a barrel-type tag which opens up and allows you to insert a piece of paper. On this paper, write the name and number of your final destination (or intermediate destinations if you are making long stops. It is easy to open and insert a new paper.) If this is not possible, then enter the name and number of someone(s) at home who agrees to be a contact for you. If your dog is missing, the finder can call this person. You can call that person regularly while your dog is gone. If they get a call, you will be able to go straight to the person who has the dog.

INFORMATION: Suppose your dog is injured in an accident or while lost. What kind of care will be given. On your dog tag somewhere, provide a statement such as: 'In case of loss or injury, expenses will be guaranteed by one of the following contacts'. Then provide at least 2 alternate telephone numbers of friends who have agreed up front to guarantee these costs, if you are unable to (due to illness or injury). If possible, put a statement such as follows on your dog's ID:

If not injured, please board @ nearest reputable kennel until arrangements can be made to get

him home. In every case, his welfare is my primary concern. If injured, take to nearest reputable vet. Contact Dr. XXXX @ XXX-XXX-XXXX re: decisions on his care/treatment. My dog's welfare is my primary concern. ALL EXPENSES WILL BE COVERED.

Indicate ALL medical conditions and Medicines

NOTE: A good tag which can handle this amount of information is the PETSCOPE which is available in most pet and grocery stores. (888-777-1213) Or a metal plate which attaches to a collar with rivets can be purchased from some pet catalogues. Some allow 4 lines of 25 characters. (You can also write on the back with permanent ink) (Source: Foster and Smith 1-800-826-7206 or [www.drsfostersmith.com](http://www.drsfostersmith.com))

- CRATE LABELS

The same information should be attached to any crate in which your dog may be riding.

#### LEAVING THE DOG ALONE IN THE CAR

This is certainly a controversial issue. Many, many people will say 'NEVER leave your dog alone in the car'. Others disagree. IF YOU DO leave your dog alone, please consider the following:

- DON'T leave the dog alone in the car in hot (or extremely cold) weather...not even for 5 minutes
- DON'T leave the dog alone in the car if you are going to be gone for more than 5-10 minutes
- Try to leave the car as close to your destination as possible so you can glance out at the car or so that a thief might feel intimidated by being so close to a store front. Don't leave the dog in a car far out in a big parking lot.
- Consider TINTING your car windows so that it is hard for a passerby to look in and realize a dog is in there (especially a dog as cute as a Westie!!)
- Take your dog in with you as often as possible. Most stores that don't sell food will allow this. Especially a small dog like a Westie and especially if you carry it in a pet pouch or put it in a cart. You'd be surprised how many stores and banks even keep doggie treats!
- Don't leave your dog in a car with the air conditioning running. What happens if it shuts off and you don't come back right away?
- If you are traveling and need to make a rest stop, try to use public rest stops that will allow you to take the dog with you; if you must go into a restaurant, use a fast food type so you can get in and out quickly.
- If you are traveling and need to stop for food, use drive thru's as much as possible. When you must get a good meal, chose a diner that has parking around the glass

windows so that you can see the car. If that is not possible, resign yourself to checking on the dog every 15 minutes or so!! (If you are traveling and must have a good meal, consider making that a dinner meal after you have stopped at your hotel so you can leave the dog in the hotel room.)

- If you leave the dog alone in a crate, take off his collar. Dog tags can become entangled in the wire crates and the dog can choke. The crate should have all identification information on it instead.

## **MEDICAL RECORDS**

Even if you are not leaving the country, it is a good idea to travel with your dog's medical records, esp. proof of an up-to-date Rabies vaccination. In case of an illness this may allow for faster care. If your dog were to bite, it might allow you to avoid quarantine. Records will help if you suddenly find you must board the dog. When leaving the country or traveling by airlines, your vet must provide a very current 'health certificate'. Because rules can be different from state to state and even more so between countries, check with the airlines or customs before you travel. (Some states require this certificate to be as recent as 7 days!) Hawaii and some countries require the dog be quarantined upon arrival. Be sure you determine the rules before you leave! Also see a booklet from the USDA called 'State-Federal Health Requirements and Regulations Governing the Interstate and International Movement of Livestock and Poultry'. Your vet probably has a copy.

## **SUPPLIES**

You will need some basic items for your dog's comfort

- Food Bowl/Food - Bring a good supply of the food your dog is used to. A quick switch in food can cause diarrhea which will put a damper on your trip!!
- Water Dish - If there is any question about the water supply, you may want to bring some from home. When you arrive, you can buy bottled water at your destination.
- Medications - Bring enough for more days than you plan to be away; bring the container in case you need a refill
- Take your Vet's name, address and phone number; ask your vet for a vet referral at the destination
- Grooming Tools - Bring a comb, brush, toothpaste and brush and perhaps scissors (if camping, you may need to cut out burrs)
- Leash - Bring at least one, and possibly a backup. Be aware that some communities have laws which require that your leash be 6 foot or less. If you normally use a retractable, you will want to have at least one leash which is no more than 6 foot for this reason.
- Doggie Bags - PLEASE bring doggie bags and clean up after your pet. People not

cleaning up after pets is one of the biggest reasons for facilities refusing to allow pets. Don't contribute to this problem.

- Towels - Your dog may get wet, may be sick, may spill. Be prepared to clean up after him.
- Flashlight - In case you have to take him out in the dark
- Lost Dog Flier - This may seem like overkill BUT if your dog were to get lost, you will have a much better chance of finding him quickly, if you have a photo of your dog ready for reproduction. You can take this a little further by making up a basic Lost Dog Flier to use in an emergency. If you make it up ahead of time while you are not upset, it will be much easier and probably more accurate. Things that can be included:

LOST WEST HIGHLAND WHITE TERRIER

GOOD CLEAR PICTURE

REWARD FOR RETURN: \$xxxxx

Weight, age, sex, any distinctive markings (e.g., tear stains, scars, limps etc.) description of collar, ID tags, license #. Leave room for contact names, phone numbers, area lost, medical needs, etc. Keep this along with negatives in your glove box or safe place, just in case.

### **GENERAL CAR TRAVEL INFORMATION**

#### **DOGS SHOULD NEVER BE IN THE FRONT SEAT!!**

Remember, most cars have front seat air bags. These can be lethal to small adults, children and pets. Even if your car does not have an air bag, your next car almost certainly will. If you let the dog ride in front now, you will have a big retraining job when you replace your car. **PUT YOUR DOG IN THE BACK SEAT!!**

#### **DOGS SHOULD ALWAYS BE RESTRAINED.**

Do you remember when seat belt laws requiring children to be 'belted up' came in and all kinds of reasons were given. All of the same reasons apply to dogs; e.g., They behave much better when belted. They are less likely to be the cause of an accident. They are less likely to be injured or killed in an accident. They are less likely to become a flying missile and kill someone else in an accident. Also, in a bad accident, rescue of the humans involved has been known to be delayed due to a loose and very protective dog in the car. If the dog is restrained, the rescuers can get to the humans more quickly. And the dogs are likely to be more gently handled if the handler is not fearful of being bitten.

- Crates - Some feel that dogs should only travel in crates. Put your wire crate in the back seat of the car. Run the seat belt through the wires and belt it down securely. Then put your dog in the crate. Put a rug or some other such item in the bottom so the dog won't slip and slide. Your dog can now be in the car with you, see everything but still be safe. (A kennel can also be used but it is harder to belt in.)
- Seat Belt Harnesses - If you don't use a crate, use a seat belt harness. The Harness

should have nice, strong straps which can withstand the impact of a crash. They should be designed so that the impact is handled by the belt and not the plastic buckles. The Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine 'Your Dog' Magazine Vol. V, #14 tested various restraints. Their top pick was the 'Ruff Rider' which can be purchased in some pet stores or see <http://www.ruffrider.com/>. Their biggest concern with most of the seat belts was their ability to withstand the pressure of the impact (both the belts and the buckles). The second concern was that you must make sure that in an impact, the dog will stop before hitting the front seat. This means checking the distance which the combination of the seat belt and harness will allow the dog to move forward. If it is too long, you must take some steps to shorten it. That might include tying a knot in the seat belt to shorten it.

- The dog can use any of the seat belts. The two side belts will limit the dog's movement more than the center belt but he can still sit or lay down.
- Most dogs will twist themselves up and need to be straightened out a few times during their first few rides but will then settle down and be just fine.
- When buying the harness, get your dog's measurements and weight. If you take the dog with you, you can try it on in the store. But remember, you don't know how to do it and you need to learn first. In a large store you can probably borrow a stuffed dog to learn on before subjecting your dog to it. In a small pet store, the manager or clerk will probably show you how to use it. Once you understand the belt, then try it on your dog. Most Westies will wear a small or medium depending on the brand.

## WINDOWS

Never let your dog hang its head out of the window. While they love to do it, it is very unsafe. Just as you would not let your child hang their arms or head out of the window, give your dog the same protection. Not only could a close moving vehicle strike them, the force of the wind could cause particles to lodge in their eyes. If they are restrained and inside the vehicle, you can leave their window down. (If you never let them do this, they will never know to miss it!!)

## BREAKS

Give the dog a rest/stretch break at least every 4 hours. Always keep the dog on leash.

## CREATING A CAR-HAPPY DOG!

Note: If your dog is on a restricted diet and cannot have treats, use his regular dog food as the treat. Then subtract the amount given from his normal dinner. If it is canned, roll up many pea sized balls for treats. If kibble, give him one kibble at a time for treats. You may need to wait until he is hungry to get him to consider it a 'treat' and take it happily.

## PUPPY

When you get your puppy, you will want to start quite early to get him/her to like the car. This can be done quite easily with most puppies.

- Start Young - Put your puppy in the back seat, in the seat belt harness or crate and ride around the block. If the puppy barks, say 'Quiet' and hand it a treat the moment it takes a breath. Keep rewarding the quiet moments.
- Lengthen the Ride - As the puppy improves, lengthen the ride. Take it someplace nice....the puppy store, the park to play, to a friend's house to visit...etc. Make sure the puppy gets more rides to good places than to bad places (vet, groomer)
- If the puppy tangles in the seat belt harness, straighten it out and continue. Don't get discouraged. They do learn not to do this IF YOU DON'T GIVE IN!!!!
- Resist having someone sit in the back seat with the puppy unless there is always going to be someone back there with it. He needs to learn to be alone back there. It might make it easier at first but it will prolong the whole process in the long run.

## DOG

- If using a crate, make sure the Dog is crate trained in the house first!!
- If using the seat belt harness, put it on the dog and let him wear it around the house until he stops noticing it.
- Train just as though it is a puppy.
- Another 'good' place is McDonalds, Dairy Queen or other food reward location

## DOG WHO IS RESISTANT TO CAR RIDING

- Treat as above but you may want to add some extra early steps
- After he is used to the crate or seat belt harness, put him (in the crate or seat belt) in the back seat of the car. Get in and sit with him in the back. Talk to him, treat him, let him know it is a good place. Do not start the car. You might even need to leave the doors open at first.
- After a couple of days, if he has settled down, you sit in the front seat and he sits in the back. Do not start the car. Give him treats during quiet moments and praise for quiet moments.
- When he is comfortable, open the garage door and start the car. Let him get used to this for a day or two.
- Next drive out into the driveway, back into the garage. If he is ok, repeat a few times.
- Now, ride around the block; treat and praise liberally.
- Finally, when he is ready, start taking longer trips. If you can have another person in the front seat who can turn to him, that may help. Actually a longer trip might

work even better than shorter trips because he will tire himself out enough to sleep. Once he begins to understand that he can sleep safely, he will improve rapidly.

### **DOG WHO IS CARSICK**

This can be caused by insecurity as well as being an actual physical ailment. If the dog is scared, the steps for the resistant dog may work. But you can also try some remedies

- Give no food or water prior to getting into the car
- Give the dog a favorite chew toy
- Open a window (don't let him stick his head out)
- Look for a pattern of when he is sick (e.g., if only on back roads, try to use more highways)
- Rescue Remedy (Health Food Store)
- Calms Forte (Health Food Store)
- Prescription Car Sick Pills or Dramamine only with Vet's dosage instructions
- Sedation is a drastic last step; Consider leaving the dog at a kennel!!!

Also see Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine 'Dog Watch' Vol. 3, #7 July 1999

### **AIRLINE TRAVEL INFORMATION**

#### **GENERAL**

- Don't go any earlier than necessary so the dog doesn't have to remain confined any longer than necessary
- Try to fly non-stop
- When you go to the airport, make sure you have the appropriate Health Certificate available
- Don't give the dog food or water for a couple of hours prior to getting on the plane (4 hours if flying Cargo)
- Exercise the dog before putting him on the plane.
- Don't give the dog tranquilizers...they may interfere with respiration. If your dog is so high-strung that they must be used, follow your vet's instructions very carefully. Talk to your vet about using them once before the trip to be sure the dog doesn't have an adverse reaction. (You don't want a bad reaction while you are in the air!)

## CABIN (Preparation)

- Check with the airline regarding their particular rules for traveling with a pet in cabin. General rules are that the pet must be small enough to fit in a carrier under the seat. The carriers are usually Sherpa Bags or similar brands which must be approved by the airline. So check with the airline to be sure the bag you buy is approved by them. In order to fit, the dog must generally be under 20#. He must fit in the bag and have room to stand up and turn around. He must not be noisy or smelly!! This means making sure he is clean and has had some training in a Sherpa type bag!
- When you make your own reservation, make a reservation for the pet. Since airlines usually only allow one or two pets in cabin at any one time, you may have to wait to get confirmation. Usually they will charge you \$50-\$75 to take the pet on board.
- Well before the trip, start training your Westie to use the bag. Initially, open the bag up and put treats in it so that the Westie will go in willingly. Don't close the bag. Just let him get used to it. Then, after a few days, put the dog in the bag and close it up. Stick treats in the bag. If the dog is calm, pick it up and walk around the room with it. Praise the dog constantly for allowing you to do this. Once the dog is able to tolerate this without noise, take the bag out to the car and set it on the floor. Ride around the block. Praise the dog. Take the dog to a store or office building and put him in the bag. Then ride up and down an elevator. (As long as the dog is quiet, most people will not even realize he is there.) Let him hear crowd noises while in the bag. Praise the dog and use treats.
- Take the dog to the carwash. Let him ride through on the back seat. When he is comfortable, put him in the bag and ride through with the bag on the car floor. Let him hear these strange sounds and feel the strange vibrations while he is in a closed bag. This may all take some time. But keep it up so that he will become accustomed to it. (Just think what a nice clean car you will have!!)
- Make sure you have the dog groomed or at least give him a bath before the trip so there are no smells to bother others and the dander is reduced.
- Make sure you line the bottom of the bag with a liner provided by the bag manufacture or a towel. Make sure you have replacements and a plastic bag to put wet ones in. (You may have to do this in the restroom if it becomes necessary.)

## CABIN - At the Airport/In the Air

- Try to fly in non-peak times (even night when your dog is more likely to sleep)
- While in the airport, do not let the dog out of the bag except in designated areas. Try not to let other people realize the dog is even there.
- While in the plane, leave the dog on the floor, in the bag. Most airlines will not let you take the dog out or let it ride in an empty seat so don't do so unless



encouraged by the flight attendants. The idea is for other passengers not to know the dog is there.

- Don't unzip the bag to let the dog's head out. You will be amazed how fast a determined Westie can get out of one of those bags if you give it a small chance!!!
- If you need to give the dog food or water while on the plane, wait until human food service is over!! Then you may want to take the bag into the restroom where, if the dog escapes, you won't have to chase him.
- If there is a layover where you can leave the plane, take the dog with you and try to find a designated area where he can relieve himself. (Ask the flight attendant before landing and they may be able to find out for you before you leave the plane.)

### CARGO - Preparation

Please try to avoid flying a dog cargo. If it does become necessary, check with others to find the airline in your area with the best reputation among pet owners and breeders. Join an email list and ask there. Talk to the various airlines and find out their regulations. Dogs have been known to die in cargo so this is an important decision, not to be taken lightly. If your dog is not in good health, don't even consider it. Talk to your vet to be sure your pet can handle it.

- Ask the airlines about what might be in the hold with your pet and how he will be protected. For example, according to "The Portable Pet by Barbara Nicholas", the USDA requires that pets be isolated from cargo packed in dry ice since dry ice emits fumes which can kill them. Sometimes the airlines will spray for bugs and that can be harmful. Talk to the airlines about your concerns.
- Make sure your hard-sided kennel meets airline regulations; don't lock the door....if you do, no one can help your animal in an emergency; Mark it LIVE ANIMALS on the top and sides in 1 inch letters with arrows pointing the right side up; provide feeding and watering instructions by taping them to the top of the kennel.
- Make a reservation for the pet when you make your own reservation.
- Avoid peak times (weekends and holidays) because there are more delays then
- If your flight requires a vet examination at the destination, make sure you schedule so that the vet is available (arrive during the week, not on a holiday and during normal working hours if possible)
- Avoid extremely hot and cold weather; if there is a delay, your pet will be in cargo possibly without any air conditioning; while he is waiting outside to be put on the plane, he is exposed to the weather.
- Make your reservations early especially if they are around Christmas when the holds are unusually full

- If you have to make a connection, be sure you know whether you have to claim your dog and transfer him yourself.
- Trim your dog's nails before the trip. If he is upset, he could catch a nail on the crate door.
- Give your pet some used towels with your scent on them and a toy or two (of a type that he cannot easily take apart)

### **MOTEL RESERVATIONS**

You will be surprised by how many motels offer accommodations to people traveling with small pets. A great resource is a book called 'On The Road Again with Man's Best Friend' by Dawn and Robert Habgood. They list 16,000 accommodations that welcome pets. Of course, this is a constantly changing base so you may prefer to go to a web site. You can find the same resource at [www.petaccommodations.com](http://www.petaccommodations.com) or [www.dogtravel.com](http://www.dogtravel.com). Or how about "<http://www.takeyourpet.com/>" with 20,000 accommodations?

### **ROOM QUALITY**

Be careful to ask questions. You may find that rather than just giving you a room, they may have some rooms designated as "pet rooms". These rooms may not be the best rooms in the hotel. In fact, they may designate their worst rooms for pets. You might also want to know if it is a first floor room and whether there is a direct outside entrance.

### **MONEY!!**

Some places require a 'pet fee'; find out if it is a refundable deposit; is it a daily or one time fee?

### **ETIQUETTE**

- Crate your dog when he is left alone in the room; turn on the TV
- Keep your dog off the furniture and bed
- Put the food and water in the bath area or another place that is not carpeted
- Inspect under the bed and in corners to be sure there is nothing harmful (like DeCon) there
- Clean up after your dog if there is an accident and outside also
- Keep your pet leashed
- Keep your pet quiet!!
- In the summer, air condition; winter, heat
- Don't leave your dog too long; check in occasionally. If you have to leave him for a long time, consider finding a local kennel where he will be safe and cared for.

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