

1. One of the most awful risks of being on the road with a pet is the chance of injury or death, to you or your pet. And not much ups that risk more than allowing a pet to roam loose around the cabin. Cats and dogs not secured in crates, cages or pet-specific restraint systems can become projectile pets. If a 60-pound (27-kilogram) German shepherd is loose inside a car traveling at 30 mph (48 kph) and there is a collision, that dog can cause an impact of 2,700 pounds (1,224 kilograms) -- an impact into another passenger or into the windshield [source: [Bark Buckle UP](#)].

Also, no matter how much they beg, pets should never ride shotgun -- restrained or not. Air bags are designed to protect adults. During a collision, they deploy at 200 mph (321 kph). That's no match for children or pets who could be injured or killed by the force [source: [PetPlace](#)].

And dog owners listen up: Dogs shouldn't be allowed to ride in truck beds where they may fall or jump out, or if restrained, choke. Nor should they be allowed to hang their heads out of car windows, increasing their risk of serious injury from flying debris -- anything that has or could hit your windshield could also hit a dog's head.

Lastly, pets left in unattended cars risk severe injury or death from heat stroke and dehydration as the inside temperatures rise. If you're not in the car, your pet shouldn't be either.

2.

A loose pet in a car may as well be a neon sign warning, "accident ahead."

Pets should always be restrained, and depending on the size and type of animal, restraints vary from harnesses and belts to crates and cages to car seats and other barriers. Unrestrained, pets could be catapulted into the passenger cabin during an accident or sudden stop.

Free roaming pets may also distract the driver, whose main attentions should be on the road. Pets might jump into a driver's lap, obstruct the driver's view or even become tangled in the gas or brake pedals, leaving the driver unable to control the car. The problem is serious; recent California legislation makes it illegal for anyone to drive with a pet in his or her lap.

3. While some dogs love the open road, many pets -- dogs and cats included -- associate car trips with unpleasant events like an outing to see the vet and become anxious at the prospect of any trip. Think shedding, biting, bladder accidents and howling.

Alleviating your pet's nervousness by taking short car trips to fun destinations (such as on a playdate or to the park) may help change those negative associations. And a few, "Good, boy" reassurances won't hurt. If all else fails, talk to your vet. There are medicines and products designed to help ease your pet's fears.

4. Don't forget to pack a leash! Depending on the distance you and your pet are traveling, you may have planned out a few stops along the way. You'll need a leash to keep your pet from running away -- especially common in new surroundings -- during those rest stops. That leash will also be needed during stops you couldn't have planned, such as accidents or breakdowns, to help keep your pet close by and out of traffic.

Regardless of how far from home you travel with your pet, all pets should always have current ID on them, either tags or a microchip, with up-to-date information including whom to contact in case of emergency.

Not all traveling pets go missing because they run. Some people want your pet as much as others want your sound system: Pets left alone in cars are at risk for being stolen. Keep your pet on a leash and with you every time you're out of the car.

5. Click it or ticket -- most people don't think twice about buckling up when they get into a car. We buy vehicles with airbags and five-star safety ratings to protect ourselves and our families from being injured in car accidents. And we're smart to do so: Despite our safety efforts, there were nearly 6.5 million auto accidents in the United States in 2005, injuring 2.9 million and killing more than 40,000 people [source: Car-Accidents.com].

Yet there's one highway hazard that many of us don't think twice about inviting into our cars: our pets. More than 71 million American homes have a pet, and 82 percent of those pets are frequent backseat drivers [source: Bark Buckle UP]. Let's unleash five common risks of driving with a pet in the car, from anxiety to fatality.

No matter how much or how little your pet enjoys riding in the car with you, carsickness can strike even the most well-traveled pet. Usually it's related to the motion of the car but anxiety about being confined or unfamiliarity with car rides can also contribute