

Holiday time and your pet



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Holidays should be happy and fun-filled times for you and your pets. With a little preparation you can make sure everyone has a wonderful and safe time.

As the UK's leading veterinary charity, PDSA treats thousands of sick or injured pets every day. Some of these are pets whose holidays haven't gone according to plan. Of course, our dedicated vets

and nurses do everything they can to put these pets on the road to recovery, but with a little extra planning many holiday accidents may be avoided altogether.

We've produced this guide to making holidays a happy and safe time for both you and your pet, whether they come with you or stay at home.



Taking your pet on holiday

Many people like the idea of having their pet with them when they go away but there are a few things you might need to consider.

Unfamiliar surroundings

Your pet will be in unfamiliar surroundings and may easily become lost or disorientated. Should the worst happen, the best thing you can do to help you be reunited with your pet as quickly as possible is to have them microchipped. Having your dog microchipped will become a legal requirement in England, Scotland and Wales in 2016 and is already a legal requirement in Northern Ireland. You must remember to keep the details registered to your microchip up to date with the database company if you move house, or change your telephone number.

As well as the microchip, your dog should also be wearing a collar with an identification tag with your name and address inscribed on it, as this is a legal requirement (Control of Dogs Order 1992). It's always best to keep your dog on a lead until you have both become familiar with an unknown area.

Beach safety

Everybody loves a trip to the seaside but you might need to take extra care as beaches can have hidden dangers for your pet. Pay extra attention when



walking along cliff paths and if you let your dog go swimming – currents can be dangerous for dogs even if they seem to be strong swimmers. Broken glass can cut paws and remember never to throw sticks for your dog as they can cause serious injuries – use a Frisbee or suitably sized ball. Always check if your dog is allowed on a beach as some beaches don't allow dogs during the summer months.



Sun safety

Delicate skin, especially on white pets, needs protection from the sun. Regularly apply high-factor pet sun block to protect the nose, ear tips and any white or hairless parts of cats or dogs. Try to stop your pets lying out in direct sun and make sure they always have access to a shaded area.

Heatstroke can be fatal and affects all pets but pets with heavy or dark coats, overweight pets, pets with flat faces and pets with certain medical conditions are more susceptible. Signs of heatstroke include excessive panting, extreme salivation, pale gums, distress and collapse. **If you're worried your pet may be overheating, contact a vet straight away.**



Don't ever leave your pet in the car – not even just for a few minutes, even with the windows open and even if you're parked in the shade. You may be delayed and the temperatures can soar in minutes. **This can be fatal.**

Heat

Our pets can overheat and get dehydrated just like us. Give your pets lots of clean, fresh water and remember to take some with you when you go out. Don't walk your dog during the middle of the day when it's very hot. Don't let your pet sit out in the heat, or leave hutches, runs or cages in direct sunlight; make sure your pets always have access to shade.



Travel abroad

There are lots of things to consider carefully before you take your pet abroad with you, not just that travelling for a long time in a car, or plane travel, can be distressing for your pet. Before booking a holiday abroad with your pet, it's a good idea to discuss your plans with your vet.

There are diseases found outside the UK that can be very serious if your pet is exposed to them and some can also affect people. These diseases can be spread by contact with wild animals, sand flies and mosquitoes, fleas, ticks and worms. Your vet can advise you on specific measures you should take to reduce the risks of these diseases.

To travel outside the UK, you'll need a pet passport issued under the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS). You must also comply with the PETS requirements to

re-enter the UK. These include having your pet microchipped, having your pet vaccinated for rabies at least 21 days before travel, having a tapeworm treatment and an up-to-date pet passport or third country veterinary certificate.

For more information, current legislation and information about how to get your pet a passport visit

[gov.uk/take-pet-abroad](https://www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad) or telephone DEFRA directly.



Having someone look after your pet while you're on holiday

If you go on holiday, you need to arrange for someone responsible to care for your pet.

Dogs can be booked into kennels, or a friend or professional pet sitter could look after them. Well-run kennels won't allow dogs to board if they haven't been vaccinated or wormed, so ensure you check your dog's vaccinations are up to date well in advance. Your dog may also need additional vaccinations, such as Kennel Cough.

Cats and rabbits can find leaving their home environment stressful and you should see if a friend, neighbour or pet sitter can look after your cat or rabbits

in your home. If this isn't possible, cats should be boarded at a reputable cattery. Again, ensure your cat's vaccinations are up to date, well in advance. Well-run catteries won't allow cats to board if they haven't been vaccinated.

If a friend or pet sitter is looking after your pet while you're away, make sure they know about your pet's requirements. Leave a list of information, such as how much food and exercise your pet needs, any medication they might be on and how to give it – and your vet's contact details for any emergencies.

You can find a pet sitter through the National Association of Registered Pet Sitters. Call **0845 230 8544** or visit **[dogsit.com](https://www.dogsit.com)**



Car safety

When transporting dogs we recommend using car safety harnesses for medium-sized and large dogs, and pet carriers for small dogs. The harness fits around the dog's chest, back and shoulders, and is then attached to one of the rear safety belts.

Make sure you put your dog on the lead before you open the car doors and that they get in and out on the pavement side.

To prevent eye injuries, don't let your dog put its head out of the window.

It's very important to carry plenty of drinking water and a bowl for your pet, even on short journeys. Stop frequently so they can go to the toilet and stretch their legs. Avoid feeding your pet just before the journey as this could lead to travel sickness.

Travelling with pets

Should you need to transport your cat or smaller pet always use a secure pet carrier. It should be either wedged into the footwell and adequately ventilated or held safely with a seat belt. Never have a pet loose in the car, and only use a cardboard cat carrier in an emergency.

Tips for stress-free travelling for rabbits

Ensure that your rabbits will not have to travel a long distance to reach the vet. If a rabbit is pregnant, advice should

be sought from a vet before transporting her.

Rabbits do not tolerate heat well, so you need to ensure your vehicle is kept cool and well ventilated, using air conditioning if necessary. You should avoid travelling during the hottest parts of the day.

Check your rabbits regularly, give them frequent breaks during journeys, and provide constant access to hay and fresh clean water. Portable, non-spill water containers can be purchased. Rabbits should be given water in the way they are familiar with (e.g. bottle or bowl) and you should check the water supply regularly.



Car training for dogs

To get your dog accustomed to the inside of your car it's useful to do 'travel training'. Let your dog explore the car's interior in a safe environment without turning on the engine. Reward your dog with praise or a small treat so that the car is associated with positive experiences.

Gradually get your dog used to wearing the car harness and having the car engine on, and when your dog feels comfortable, take them on a short journey, held securely with the dog seat belt. Use a pet carrier if they are too small for a safety harness. Gradually lengthen the journeys.



For more information on the five welfare needs or further advice on looking after your pet, visit:

pdsa.org.uk/pet-health-advice