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Buckle Up Bowser

By Luigi Fraschini

According to the Travel Industry Association of America, of the 71 million people in the U.S. who own dogs, over 29 million travel with them. This not only includes the busy vacation summer months, but in many cases, daily trips around the hometown. While the companionship is great, this can present a safety hazard to both pets and humans. A 2007-2008 APPMA National Pet Owners Survey found 80 percent of pet owners say they travel with their pets but never use a restraint.

As pets travel increases, more states are initiating laws addressing dogs in vehicles. California requires dogs in the open back of a pickup to be either in a cage or cross-tied to the truck unless the sides of the truck are at least 46 inches high. New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maine, Oregon, Washington, Florida and Rhode Island restrict dogs from riding in pickup trucks or open vehicles with the exception of some working dogs (and they must wear hard hats). Nevada, New York and Vermont also have pending bills that would ban the transport of dogs in the back of pickup trucks.

"I think that in many cases what keeps people from utilizing pet restraints is a misconception that they require too much time and money to install and use them," said APPMA President Bob Vetere. "As is the case in almost every sector of the pet industry, manufacturers are bringing more convenient products to market, and travel safety devices are no exception."

The newest pet travel products are not only easy to install and use, but also protect pets and people in vehicles, as well as make travel more convenient and enjoyable. For example, Ruff Rider's Canine Vehicle Restraint System (ruffrider.com) easily attaches to any vehicle's seatbelt system. The Canine Vehicle Restraint System is vet-approved and exceeds S.A.E. tensile strength standards for human seatbelts. It also includes a short walking lead for all-around use.

Veterinary Ventures Inc.'s new Hydro-Go(tm) Portable Pet Canteen (petfountain.com) features a convenient fold out bowl which allows for easy drinking when you're away from home (by your dog or cat, that is). The bowl and canteen work together to form a funnel, easily allowing the unused water to be poured back into the canteen. The Hydro-Go(tm) has a wide, adjustable shoulder strap that holds 36 ounces of water and is dishwasher-safe.

Komfort Pets (komfortpets.com) has introduced a new Climate Controlled Pet Carrier, which utilizes thermal electronic technology and airflow systems to maintain a consistent interior temperature of 72 degrees. You can even accessorize the pet carrier with safety features, including technology in the kennel that can notify the pet owner via text message if the power source

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has been interrupted or the carrier temperature is out of range.

Kurgo's Auto Zip Line(tm) (kurgo.com) features a tension cable that attaches between the two rear passenger side handles, creating a tether run for the dog. The secured line allows the dog the freedom to move around in the back seat while providing safety in case of sudden stops. The Backseat Barrier(tm) (also by Kurgo) is a strong divider that attaches behind the driver and passenger's seats and restricts dogs from moving between the front and back seats of the vehicle. Dogs stay where you put them, protecting driver and passengers from the potential hazard of your family pet propelling into the front seat when the vehicle stops short.

And who could possibly do without Aspen Pet Products' DogGone Songs(tm) (aspenpet.com) -- Traveling tunes for you and your pet! This musical CD contains soothing piano melodies composed with the award-winning Schoenberger Effect. The original compositions will provide a peaceful and noticeable calmness over your pet during travel.

After all this, we could use some calmness ourselves. So have a doggone good time this summer.

Proud pet owner Luigi Frascini covers the automobile industry and safety issues from his home in Cleveland.

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