



If you have a dog, chances are there will regularly be times where you will need to transport it – whether that is to the Vet Clinic for a health check, to the park for some exercise, or maybe to a training class, competition, or club activity.

Legal Requirements

There are laws in Victoria relating to how animals are transported. Most of these form part of the [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act](#), and its [Regulations](#). However there are laws included in the [Road Safety Rules 2017](#) that specifically relate to animals as well.

Both of these pieces of legislation carry significant penalties for people who break the law.

The [Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Dogs](#) (which applies to ALL dog owners in Victoria) has both minimum standards (based on the requirements outlined in the *Acts*) as well as ‘recommended best practice’ for the transporting of dogs and is an excellent reference for all dog owners.

Regardless of the type of transport, the owner or ‘person in charge’ is responsible for making sure that all animals in their care are transported appropriately and that their essential needs are provided.

This means that they are transported in a safe position in the vehicle, provided with food and water, effective ventilation, and are protected from both heat and cold.



Transporting a Dog in a Car

It is **ILLEGAL** to:

- » Drive a vehicle with an animal on your lap.
- » Lead an animal while in or on a vehicle (includes both driver and passengers)
- » Place or transport an animal in the boot of a sedan type car
- » Leave an animal unattended inside a car for more than 10 minutes when outside temperatures are at or above 28 degrees Celsius

All dogs should be adequately restrained when travelling inside a vehicle for the safety of both the dog and human passengers.

This can be achieved by:

- » Travelling the dog behind a cargo barrier
- » Restraining the dog with a dog seat belt or other restraining device
- » Travelling the dog inside a crate or travel cage that is placed or tethered in such a way as to prevent it from rolling or moving as the car moves.

Dogs that are not restrained in some way can cause accidents and can distract the driver or potentially restrict the driver’s ability to control the vehicle.

If there was to be an accident, an unrestrained dog can become a projectile potentially injuring both itself and the people in the vehicle.

If you are going to open the windows of the car, they should never be open so far as the dog could fall or jump out.

You should also not let your dog travel with their head out of the car window. This is not only illegal but can lead to injury or damage to the dog’s eyes, ears and nose due to airborne dirt particles hitting them at high speed.



Transporting a dog on the tray of a Utility-type Vehicle or on a Trailer

It is **ILLEGAL** to:

- » Transport a dog in or on the tray of a motor vehicle (such as a ute or trailer) if it is not appropriately secured (tethered or caged) in such a way to prevent it *'from falling off or out of, or from, or moving off the tray or trailer'* or being injured from the movement of the motor vehicle or trailer.

**The only exemption to this is where a dog is actively working livestock.*

- » Secure a dog on the metal tray of a motor vehicle (such as a ute) or trailer when outside temperatures are at or above 28 degrees Celsius without the dog having access to an area of insulating material protecting the dog from contact with the metal surface.

Across Australia many dogs are killed or seriously injured every year from travelling on the back of open and moving vehicles.

Injuries may occur when the dog falls from the moving vehicle, attempts to jump from the vehicle, gets struck by a passing vehicle, or gets dragged alongside a moving vehicle.

It is a requirement that dogs are tethered, but the tether must be the correct length to ensure the dog's safety. It needs to be long enough for the dog to be able to both sit and lie down, but not so long that the dog could reach the sides of the vehicle, get up on top of the cabin of the vehicle, or harass passersby when the vehicle is stationary.

Tethers need to have swivels at both ends to prevent tangling and need to be made of robust material so that it is unlikely to break, can't be chewed through, and is not so thin as to cause injuries if the dog becomes tangled in it.

Other Considerations when Travelling your dog

Heat Stress

Even when the weather is not that hot, dogs can get heat stress whilst travelling in a car or an enclosed space such as a travel crate.

This is even more of a risk in brachycephalic breeds (those with a shortened muzzle) who have a reduced ability to cool themselves through the evaporative cooling provided by panting.

Dogs must not be left unattended in a car if there is a possibility of heat stress occurring or in situations of extreme cold.

If you need to leave your dog in a parked car – even if it only for a few minutes on a cool day – you should park your vehicle in the shade and ensure that the windows are open wide enough to provide ventilation, but not so wide that the dog could get out or get its head stuck. You should also provide water in a non-spill container.

The interior of a car or travel crate can quickly heat up, so be very aware of weather conditions, and plan your travel so that the need to leave your dog in the car is reduced or removed altogether.

Travel in the cooler parts of the day where possible and make sure that you cool the interior of your vehicle, if it is already hot inside the cabin, before loading your dog.





Transport Cages and Crates

Regardless of whether a transport cage is located inside a vehicle or on the tray of a ute or trailer, it needs to be sized to allow the dog to stand, turn around, lie down and act normally.

Containers must also have multiple ventilation holes on at least three sides of the container to provide air flow.

If using a cage to travel the dog on an open tray, it needs to have cover to protect the dog(s) from the sun, wind and rain, and it should be placed directly behind the cabin of the vehicle to minimise exposure to the wind and from dust and other airborne particles.

If you are travelling your pet by air, the transport cage must meet the [International Air Transport Association \(IATA\) standards](#). These standards are often referred to in other transport situations as a reference because they are internationally accepted.

Longer Trips

If you are going on a longer trip, you will need to stop regularly to allow your dogs to exercise and toilet, and an opportunity to drink and eat (depending on the length of your trip).

If stopping in unfamiliar places, make sure to use a leash whilst exercising your dog - regardless of how good their off-leash behaviour is at home. You do not want your dog to escape in an unusual area, or for any accidents to occur.

If your dog is not used to longer trips, you might want to get them accustomed to travelling with a few short trips before going on a longer trip.

Note: If your dog gets car sick, or is very anxious when travelling, consult your veterinarian for advice. There are medications that can assist with motion sickness, making the trip less stressful for everyone.

Travelling a dog in a Dog Trailer or Dog Float

If you are travelling with larger breeds of dog or a number of dogs at the same time, a dog trailer may also be an option. These are trailers that are kind of like a cross between a horse float and a caravan, usually partitioned into a number of 'bays' or 'berths' for each dog.

Dog trailers typically have good ventilation with small vents stamped into the panels that make up the walls and doors of the trailer; however this can pose a problem in wet and stormy weather as rain and water thrown up by vehicles can get sucked into the interior as the vehicle moves.

The ventilation works well when the vehicle is moving, however once stationary, ventilation becomes greatly reduced, and care must be taken to ensure that animals inside do not get heat stress.

Similar to a car, you want to park your dog trailer in a shaded spot when not travelling. Most dog trailers have 'double doors' meaning the outer solid door can be opened to allow increased ventilation, whilst the inner doors keep the dogs safely confined.

If you are considering purchasing a dog trailer, you also need to consider the flooring material. Many older floats have a timber floor (which can rot or deteriorate over time, especially if it is often wet/exposed to the weather), whilst others have a metal floor.

Metal floors are generally more durable over time, however the radiant heat from the road surface can lead to the metal floor becoming very hot as well as conducting heat into the interior of the trailer. Metal floored trailers need to be well insulated to protect the dogs travelling inside.

Regardless of the flooring or set up of a dog trailer, you need to regularly check the wheel bearings, inspect the floor for damage, and make sure that all door locks are working properly. There are horror stories of doors coming open on the highway, floors rotting through, and bearings seizing during travel.

Like any mode of transport - safety first!