

Transport Protocol: Freedom Drivers

Transporting animals is a very rewarding experience. However, there is certain protocol that needs to be followed in order to make sure both the animals and people are safe. The following protocol should be followed during transports as much as possible. We understand that exceptions sometimes have to be made and we trust that you will use your best judgement when making decisions about the animals. If you ever aren't sure about what to do in a given situation, please contact the transport co-ordinator. She will be monitoring your run as it is happening.

We ask that you do not bring children under the age of 12 on transports with dogs. Although we do assess the dogs, we cannot guarantee their temperament and they have not always been tested with children.

We do NOT recommend bringing your own pets along on transports. If you choose to do so, please ensure that they have been fully vaccinated. The dogs and cats coming from the pound have not necessarily been vaccinated. We would not want your pet to get sick from a pound animal. Again, although dogs are assessed before leaving the pounds, we cannot guarantee that they will get along with all other animals. We wouldn't want your pet to be injured either. Please know that if you bring your own pet with you, it is at your own risk and we cannot be held responsible for any illness or injury to your pet.

Often, dogs come from the pound without leashes and sometimes without collars. You will want to keep some spares in your car. We recommend slip leads as the dogs cannot escape these. You will also want to keep paper towels, Lysol wipes, a blanket and/or towel, poo bags, and pee pads. We also recommend that you cover your seats with sheets or old blankets as dogs can sometimes have accidents or get sick in the cars.

Animals should NOT be fed during transport, particularly "people food" (other than perhaps a *small* dog or cat treat or two). They can easily get carsick or an upset stomach. It can also lead to unnecessary vet visits for the rescue or messes in your car. Sometimes, animals are vetted the same day of transport, so they need to have fasted for surgery. Feeding them can prevent them from being able to have their surgery and cost the rescues unnecessary boarding fees. Animals may also have allergies that we don't know about. Giving uncrated dogs a bone or other treats can also trigger food aggression and lead to fights. These animals have been in a pound and have often developed resource guarding issues. We don't want anyone to get hurt by dogs fighting over bones or other large treats. A couple of small, one bite treats are ok, as is water, but nothing beyond that please!

A note to Fosters: Please do not feed dogs the morning of transport! They will often get car sick and vomit if they have been fed. It's better for them to be hungry than for them to be sick all day. They are often in the car for hours.

Sometimes animals are crated for transport. Cats are always crated. If you absolutely need to clean a crate for any reason, make sure all the doors and windows in your car are closed so the animal doesn't escape and that there is no residue from the cleaner on the crate when you put the animal back in. We don't want animals getting sick from the chemicals!

Please make sure dogs are tethered in your car. They should NEVER be loose in the car. This can lead to fights and/or distraction for you. They can be tied to door handles or headrests with their leashes. Don't give them a lot of wiggle room! There shouldn't be any nose to nose contact unless you absolutely can't avoid it. If we have decided to crate a dog, there is a good reason! Please ensure that the dog stays crated for the entire transport. Sometimes small dogs are crated not because of their own behaviour or issues, but to keep them safe from bigger dogs on the same transport. There shouldn't be animals in the front seat if they are heavy enough to activate the airbag. Crated animals may go in the front seat. They usually will not activate the airbag. If you can, turn off the passenger side airbag. **NEVER drive with animals in your lap!**

If you are taking dogs for pee breaks, be very vigilant. They may try to escape. Remember they may have been at the pound for a while and running free could be very tempting! Try to do this when both drivers are present so you have back-up if anything goes wrong. Double leashing is recommended, if possible, particularly if a dog is a known flight risk. Again, we recommend slip leads as dogs can't back out of these.

As for the kitties, please do NOT open their crates. You may be tempted to give them water, but better a little dehydration than a lost cat, or dogs going after them because they're loose in the car. Please check crates at each transfer point to ensure that they are still closed tightly. Crates should be lifted with one hand on the handle and one hand underneath. They get used a lot. They also get taken apart and put back together a lot, so the clasps can get loose, or even break.

It is critical that you keep in touch through the Facebook conversation during your ride (not while driving of course) so that we know if the run is on schedule. Please include the time of arrival/departure from each transfer point in your message as time stamps disappear. Text or call the next driver as you leave if they (or you) don't have messenger, especially if you know you are running early or late. Pictures are always appreciated as well!

If there is paperwork (or food, leash, crate, etc) that came with an animal, please ensure that it gets transferred to the next driver.

If you have an emergency on the road, or if you need to pull over to move animals around in your car, or clean up after an animal, please pull off at an exit and find a safe, quiet place to park if at all possible. These animals are anxious and often scared. They will run away if they get the chance. A busy highway is the last place we want to have a dog or cat escape one of our cars!

I hope this helps everyone, particularly our new drivers. We appreciate everything you do in helping to bring these animals to safety. We love our Freedom Drivers!!!!