

Humane Officer's Corner by Jill Posanski

Driving with Pets:

It's 5:45am on a very foggy morning. Slick roads caused a minivan to slide off the roadbed and hit a tree. Damage to the vehicle causes the back hatch to pop open. The dogs riding loose back there panic and jump out onto the shoulder of the road. By the time the driver exits the van, one dog has almost been hit by oncoming traffic. The other dog has bolted up a farm field. She is found, and because the owner contacted residents in the area, he got a call to come pick her up.

This is a call I responded to a few years back. Some of what went wrong was unavoidable, but the situation could have been less severe with some forethought. Here's what I thought could have helped the situation. Number one: If the owner would have crated the animals in the back of the vehicle, they would likely have remained in the vehicle. I know a lot of people who travel with pets loose in their vehicles. I wish they wouldn't! Unfortunately, with my job, I get to see some very bad injuries to animals. Most people would never let their kids ride without a seat restraint in the car. For some reason, these same people give no thought to having their pet riding in there loose. In an accident, the pet becomes a missile moving at whatever speed the car was going before the crash. They go flying into window glass, and sometimes right through it. If you travel with a pet, secure them in your vehicle. They are much safer that way. Paramedics and police don't have to deal with getting past protective or panicky pets, to provide care to you. If other drivers get in an accident while trying to avoid your pet in the road, you can be held liable for their medical and property damage bills.

Number two: when traveling with your pet, keep a current owner tag on the pet. The dog in the foggy morning accident only had an old rabies tag on its collar. Those are very hard to trace back to the owner efficiently. An identification tag with your name and contact numbers is best. Consider putting your cell number on the tag, too. If you don't like the jingle of tags, write your phone number on their collar in permanent marker, or bind the tags together. Microchips have their place, but a quick ID tag is best for most situations. If your pet doesn't tolerate a collar, at least write your phone number on the pets crate. Most people who find pets want to see them get back to the owner.

I hope I've provided some thought provoking information! Act on it!

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