



## **PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES**

The purpose of this lecture is to discuss considerations for traveling with your Pilot Dog. This lesson will explain:

- Considerations for relieving/food/water
- Essential supplies for travel
- Work expectations in unfamiliar areas
- Specific advice for car/train/plane travel
- Resources for traveling with your Pilot Dog

### **Considerations for Relieving/Food/Water**

- When you travel, you should always attempt to maintain your dog's normal schedule for relieving, feeding, and watering.
- It is a good idea to give more relief times rather than too few, especially if you are asking your dog to relieve on a surface he is not accustomed to. The dog may also need more time than he needs at home for each relief time.
- Many people premeasure the number of meals the dog will eat during the trip into individual sandwich bags, and then add a couple more in case unexpected delays are encountered.
- We advise you to carry the dog's food in your carry-on luggage if you are flying; you should not assume you will be able to find the dog's food in an unfamiliar city, and it is not a good idea to feed an unfamiliar food. Change in food combined with stress could cause loose stools.

### **Essential Supplies for Travel**

Recommended supplies for travel include:

- Travel bowls for food and water - there are many different types available
- Bags for relief clean up
- Paper towels, baby wipes, and a gallon zip-locking bag for emergency cleanup

- Grooming supplies
- A folded blanket or towel, if your dog sleeps on one at home, that will fit in your luggage - this will show the dog where his place is and will keep much of the hair he may shed in one place
- A tie-down
- Nylabone
- KONG (optional)

### **Work Expectations in Unfamiliar Areas**

Your Pilot Dog should be able to generalize his travel skills to any work environment that requires curb-to-curb travel; however, remember that your dog works best in areas familiar to you. This is because you understand a familiar environment well enough to know what the dog's movements in harness are communicating to you.

When you are in an unfamiliar environment, unless you are very confident in your independent travel skills, the dog may appear to lack confidence in his work or may appear to not be working safely. This is especially true if the area you are visiting is very complex or is totally different from the area you usually work at home.

When working your dog in an unfamiliar environment, it is best to be prepared with some understanding of the environment, to carry a cell phone and/or GPS in case you get disoriented, and to be understanding of your dog if small work errors are made. It is also recommended to briefly increase the use of food reinforcement, especially if you are working with someone to help pattern the dog to the new environment.

### **Specific Advice for Car/Train/Plane Travel**

- **Car Travel**
  - Most Pilot Dogs love car travel. In general, the best place for them is on the floor at your feet.
  - Some Pilot Dog handlers have a crate installed in their family vehicles for dog safety in case of an accident, and others have acclimated their dogs to seat belts designed for dogs for the same reason.
  - It is important to note that if the dog rides on the floor of the passenger seat, he must stay lying down. If you happened to be in a car accident when the dog was

sitting up, the location of the passenger airbag could seriously injure or kill the dog.

- **Train Travel**

- If traveling by train, the most important thing to know in advance is which station stops are long enough for you to take the dog out and relieve him.
- If you will need assistance relieving the dog, that should be requested in advance as well.
- If you are traveling independently, you may want to ask train personnel for information about the train platform at an unfamiliar station.

- **Plane Travel**

- Most Pilot Dogs adjust well with plane travel. Pilot Dogs recommends skipping the meal right before the flight, and giving only a small amount of water.
- You may find that your dog has a tendency to vomit bile if his stomach is completely empty. If this is the case, he may do better if you give him just a very small handful of kibble at the meal time closest to the flight.
- Many airports now have service animal relief areas inside the terminal. These are generally very small areas with a layer of Astroturf. It is worth giving the dog an extra chance to relieve if you have an especially long travel day. Most people find it is not worth the bother to take the dog outside during a layover and have to go through security again.
- Remember that the dog comfortably “holds it” through the night and will not be moving around much during the flight, so it is possible for dogs to wait until the end of a long travel day to relieve.
- Your dog’s harness will set off a metal detector, as will the collar and leash.
  - Most handlers keep the dog’s equipment on and have the dog hand-screened.
  - In general, the best thing to do is follow the instructions of the TSA personnel. Airline screening setups vary between airports, and employees may lack experience in communicating information to people who are visually impaired.
  - It is important to know they are not allowed to separate you from your dog and they are not allowed to require the dog’s equipment to be removed.

- They are required to do a hand screening of your dog if he sets off the metal detector, and this does require them to touch the dog.
- There are two forms that airlines are allowed to require:
  - [A U.S. DOT form attesting to the dog's health, behavior, and training](#)
  - [A U.S. DOT form attesting that the dog can either not relieve himself or can relieve himself in a sanitary manner, if the dog will be on a flight that is 8 or more hours](#)
- Airlines may deny transport to a service dog if the airline requires completed DOT service animal forms and the service animal user does not provide the airline with these forms.
- Airlines are not permitted to require other documentation from service animal users except to comply with requirements on transport of animals by a federal agency, a U.S. territory, or a foreign jurisdiction.
- Airlines are permitted to deny transport to a service dog if the dog:
  - Violates safety requirements - e.g., too large or too heavy to be accommodated in the cabin;
  - Poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
  - Causes a significant disruption in the cabin or at airport gate areas; or
  - Violates health requirements - e.g., prohibited from entering a U.S. territory or foreign country.
- Pilot Dogs suggests making sure you get preferred seating and letting the airline know ahead of time if you need them to provide assistance getting to your gate.
- Some people prefer bulkhead seating so the dog has room to stretch out, and others prefer a regular seat so they can tuck their dog under the seat in front of them and keep him out of the foot space of other passengers. Both options are acceptable.
- The airline is not allowed to restrict your seating choices because of the presence of your Pilot Dog, although they are allowed to insist that your dog not block the aisle.
- Most dogs sleep through the entire flight; however, some dogs may show concern when the engines first start up and during takeoff and landing.

- You can allow the dog to sit during these times if it feels more comfortable in this position; he will most likely lie down soon after.
- You can also feed a couple of treats and rub the dog's ears in case pressure changes cause mild discomfort.
- The most important thing is to stay calm. If you stay calm, so will the dog.

### **Resources for Traveling with Your Pilot Dog**

- The TSA has a helpline called TSA Cares, specifically designed to assist travelers with disabilities. You may call TSA Cares toll free at 855.787.2227.
- If you believe you have been discriminated against by airline personnel, you are entitled to immediate assistance in the airport from a Complaint Resolution Official (CRO). You may also file a complaint with the Department of Transportation (DOT). DOT also has a Disability Hotline (800.778.4838) that you can call if you have questions about your rights when traveling with a service dog.
- The service animal "Where to Go" app for most smartphones contains a regularly-updated list of locations of service animal relief areas inside terminals for all U.S. airports, as well as a list of Frequently Asked Questions about the DOT and a list of federal laws applying to service animals.
- NAGDU (National Association of Guide Dog Users) is the guide dog affiliate of the NFB. They also have an iPhone app called NAGDU which lists all the state laws applying to service dogs and also allows you to contact the NAGDU hotline for any questions about access or other general guide dog questions.