Points on Pets: Moving can be stressful for dogs

by R.G._Elmor_DVM

Q: Unfortunately, our family will be moving in about six weeks to a new home about 1,000 miles from where we live now. It is a great understatement to say that this move is causing a lot of anxiety within our family. One of our biggest concerns now is how to handle our three dogs during and after the move.

What can we do to prepare them for the move? None of our dogs have ever traveled in our car farther than to our veterinarian's office, which is about three miles away.

A: Although moving is a very common occurrence in today's mobile society, it is an understatement to say that it can be very stressful for everyone within a household, including the family pets. It is not uncommon for people who have moved to state that they believed their pets were aware of something big about to happen in their lives before the move actually occurred. Most pets seem to be able to sense impending major life changes within their families. Changing daily routines while planning and preparing for a move is very stressful for most people and their animals.

You should have your dogs examined by your veterinarian well before the day of the actual move. During this visit, your dogs' immunizations can be brought up to date and the required health certificates for interstate travel can be prepared. You should ask your veterinarian for a copy of your dogs' medical records or a summary to present to your new veterinarian in your new location. Your local veterinarian might even be able to recommend a new veterinarian to you and even call ahead to help arrange your first visit for your dogs.

If your dogs are taking medications or are eating prescription diets, your current veterinarian can prepare enough to get them through the period of the move and early adjustment in your new home. Your current veterinarian can alert you to any new diseases or health concerns that your dogs might encounter in their new location.

It might be well for you to take your dogs to a friend's house or boarding kennel while your belongings are being loaded for the move. This might prevent some stress and a possible escape. This will give you one less worry on that very busy day. While traveling to your new home, you should have familiar bedding and toys available for your dogs.

After moving, you should take some time to acquaint yourself and your dogs with your new environment. Taking time out of your very busy schedule to relax with your dogs will be good for you and them. Hopefully, you and your dogs will help each other through what can be a very stressful time for everybody.

Q: We are wondering what the best way is to remove a fishhook from a cat. We have a small fishing pond on

our property. Our cats are constantly prowling around while our friends are fishing from the banks of the pond. I live in fear worrying about our cats eating a fishhook.

A: Fortunately, most fishhooks are not difficult to remove if you can clearly see them and have the right tools. You should simply push the hook through the tissue in which it is embedded until the barb is free. You can then cut the shank of the hook next to the barb with wire cutters and remove it in two pieces. Usually, the hardest part of this procedure is restraining the cat without getting scratched or bitten.

Any pet seen swallowing a fishhook should be taken to a veterinarian as soon as possible. Trying to remove a swallowed hook can cause serious injury to the animal if not done correctly. As difficult as it is, prevention of swallowing a fishhook is much better than dealing with this problem after it occurs.

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