

Boating with Pets

Some tips that will make your day on the water safe and enjoyable for all

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Boating with the family pet is a great way for you & your family to enjoy the wonderful & exciting sport of recreational boating. By taking a few minutes to do some preparation & then following some simple guidelines, you can insure a fun and safe time for all.

Bring Drinking Water

Before getting underway, make sure you have enough water for you as well as your pets & a stable bowl from which they can drink. Bring water in bottles with sports caps allows easy & convenient access when needed.

Dogs perspire through panting, and while doing so, loose copious amounts of body fluids. It's imperative to keep them hydrated. Quite often, they will not voluntarily drink water while onboard a boat. Remember, you know better, and as responsible pet owners, sometimes you will need to stay alert and encourage them to drink on a regular basis. It's amazing what a little coaxing will do.

Use Lifejackets

Not all pets can swim! Not all dogs are great swimmers and depending on the boat type & location, if your pet falls overboard, they may not be able to be rescued before they experience exhaustion or hypothermia. So, while animal lifejackets are not USCG approved, they could save your pet's life as well as helping to promote wearing lifejackets by pet owners & their children. Thus, the Safe Boating Campaign slogan "Boat Smart – Boat Safe – Wear It!" holds true for pets as well, so make sure your pet wears a Lifejacket whenever near or on-the-water!

There are [automatic inflatable lifejackets](#) for pets that keep their head out of the water in addition to keeping the animal afloat like most inherently buoyant pet lifejackets.



BEFORE INFLATION



INFLATED

These lifejackets use an 8 gram CO2 cylinder for up to 15 pound pets, 12 gram for up to 40 pounds and 25 gram for up to 200 pounds. These lifejackets also have manual and oral inflation capability for humans to use if the CO2 cylinder fails to inflate the lifejacket.

Pet Lifejackets are sold by all the major marine vendors. When buying a pet lifejacket, be sure to read the label & try it on your pet. Then be sure to use it as intended rather than just storing it on the boat!

The Boat/US Foundation pet Lifejacket study is available at:
<http://www.boatus.com/foundation/findings/findingsdog.htm>

Introducing Pets to Boating

Take short trips in calm waters at first to let your pet get acclimated to the pitch and roll of being in a boat. Remember, if you can get seasick, so can your pets!

Dealing with Sun & Heat

Since humans typically go boating on warm sunny days, special attention & accommodations must be made for your pets! Too much sun and heat creates problems for animals.

Dogs and cats (as well as many other pets) can suffer from such heat emergencies as heat cramps, heat exhaustion and sun stroke. So make sure there is a shaded area on the boat that your pet can hide under that ideally will have air movement to aid in cooling the pet down. Remember to make sure all pets regularly drink water. If they will tolerate it, wetting down their coats may help them feel cooler although it may not be very effective due to the way pets cooling systems operate.

Remember to protect the pads located on a pet's paws. Dogs and cats absorb cold and heat through the pads located on their paws, so be careful they don't burn them on the hot surfaces including boat fiberglass.

Doing their Business

As with humans who are properly hydrating their bodies, every couple of hours, your animals will need to relieve themselves. The options available depend on the type of pets you have.

Cats – place their litter box at the lowest level of the boat and make sure its level. This should induce them to use their litter box. Surrounding the litter box with pillows or other soft items may help kitty feel more secure should you get into rough seas.

Dogs – you can train dogs to do their business in a specific spot. It is hard work, but it can be done. If you're going to cruise, this would be the best bet. This way, you don't have to find land every few hours to let them relieve themselves.

On the other hand, you can always go ashore and let them do their business. Remember, pick up and properly dispose of the waste products left by your animals. The Marine Sanitation Environmental Laws should be respected; even though this is not human waste – it still causes bacterial problems. If you go ashore, be aware there may be animal waste laws in effect that you need to comply with!

Remember to always be a courteous, responsible & safe boater!