

Canine Catch-Neuter-Return (CNR) Good Practice Guides

Dog transportation

Learning Outcomes:

1. Explain the risks to the dog during transportation
2. Outline the ways we can mitigate the negative impacts on dog welfare during transportation

Transport is a known stressor of dogs and may be a particular welfare problem. Despite this transportation of dogs is a requirement in all CNR programmes, whether the clinic is mobile or stationary.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to adequately provide water to dogs during transportation. This, as well as the often-high environmental temperatures and humidity, can pose a serious risk to these dogs even on short journeys. Lack of drinking water, panting due to stress and high environmental temperatures can lead to dehydration, hyperthermia and even death.

To minimise these risks to the dogs, we need to consider these four factors:

1. Duration of travel

Try to minimise its duration. This relies on the planning of the CNR program so that the areas and routes planned for capture of dogs are within a reasonable distance of the clinic.

2. Environmental temperature

In warm climates, dogs should be transported in the early morning or late evening when the environmental temperature is cooler, and the streets are quieter.

3. Sufficient space for each dog

There are many different designs of transportation vehicle for CNR programs, where the type of vehicle selected is dependent on the catching equipment or techniques used, and also meeting the needs of the programme in terms of number of dogs to be neutered per day. Each dog should have adequate space to stand, turn around, move away from faeces, urine, vomit or from other dogs and not be at risk of unnecessary harm from the vehicle or from other dogs.

Consider how easy it will be to clean the vehicle as some of these dogs may be carrying infectious diseases and could infect subsequent dogs if the vehicle is not cleaned adequately.

4. Prevent unnecessary harm

Unfortunately, dogs are sometimes harmed by the vehicle itself, often when being placed into it or removed from it. We need to make sure accessing the dogs in the vehicle is easy and safe for both the dog and staff.

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Dog catching pole being used to remove a dog from a vehicle

Individual vs group transportation

Ideally dogs should be individually housed in the vehicle to reduce the risks of hyperthermia and injury from dog fights. You can see that this vehicle has large individual cages ensuring that each dog has sufficient space and is protected from unnecessary harm caused by dog fighting. Often individual transportation vehicles are more expensive, and space is limited by the number of cages in the vehicle.



Example of individual cages in a vehicle

Because of this group transportation is often used in CNR programmes while still considering the four factors to minimise the risk to the dogs.

When using group transportation, it is often useful to have a staff member in the back of the vehicle with the dogs experiencing the same temperatures as the dogs who therefore can inform the rest of the team if it is too hot so that they stop catching and return to the clinic.



Staff member in the back of the vehicle with the dogs experiencing the same temperature as the dogs

Additionally, this experienced staff member can intervene to separate dogs, preventing dog fights from occurring. However, staff safety must be considered and there is the risk of the staff getting bitten if they intervene in dog fights.



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Checklist:

- ✓ Minimise duration of travel
- ✓ Transport in the early morning or late evening
- ✓ Sufficient space for each dog
- ✓ Protect from unnecessary harm: from vehicle or other dogs

References:

Bacon, H., et al. (2017). "Canine trap-neuter-return: a critical review of potential welfare issues." *Animal Welfare* 26(3): 281-292.