

## Conch Characters / Around Town



Pretty impressive catch by Coach Jimmy Johnson!



Rob LeBrun and brother James enjoyed skydiving recently at Sugarloaf Key. We wish Rob a fond farewell as he leaves the Keys to be with family upstate. We will sure miss you, Rob!



The Sweet Peas performed songs from the roaring twenties, plus a few misfits, at the Key Largo Park in late April (L-R) Janis Jipson, Susan Anderson, Jody Koblenzer.



The Big Chill is an impressive property!



And so is the Lorelei!



Lorelei "Superfan" Dave helps Michael Trixx with his show.



Blast from the past - Marilee Free and Richard Donnelly performing "I Did it Sideways" at the Paradise Pub.



Tim Hayn & Jazmin Guevera traveled from Venice Beach to play at the Lorelei in May. Photo by Rob LeBrun.

## Driving With a Dog on Your Lap

While driving under the influence was once the major focus of safety on the road, distracted driving of all kinds has gained national attention in recent years. Texting while driving has proven to be the latest serious road hazard; it has cost a number of lives, and most states have developed laws and campaigns against it.

Now, many states are focusing their attention on a new threat - one that has gone under the radar thus far, but may prove to be as dangerous as texting and driving. This one involves the widely practiced habit of choosing to drive with a dog sitting on your lap.

### The Issues

There are no real statistics to say exactly how many crashes and other traffic incidents are caused by pets riding on laps. However, The American Automobile Association (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety notes that taking your eyes off the road for just two seconds doubles your chance of a crash. That two seconds is all it could take for a frightened or excited pet to jump up on you, claw you, climb up onto the dashboard, or worse - crawl under the brake pedal.

### The Facts

A survey by AAA and Kurgo sought to uncover the truth about how and why people drive with their pets, as well as any potential distractions their furkids might cause. The findings were interesting, to say the least; nearly 60 percent of respondents had driven with their pets in the last month, and 31 percent admitted to being distracted by their pet while driving. Distractions included everything from feeding and petting their pets, to taking their photos while driving.

Seventeen percent of respondents who drove with their pet - nearly one in five - admitted to either allowing their pet to sit on their lap, or holding their pet while driving. Twenty-three percent admitted to using their hands or arms to secure their pet when they hit the brake



be cited for doing so under broader distracted driving laws. Increased awareness would likely also make a great difference. AAA notes that drivers who have heard of cases where unrestrained dogs were injured, or caused injuries to someone during a crash, were three times more likely to use a pet travel restraint. And, while we love our pets and want them to enjoy every experience with us, the safest place for them (and everyone else riding along) is to be

### The Reasons

Respondents cited several reasons for not restraining their pets in their vehicles. The biggest of these reasons was their pet's temperament; they considered their pet to be calm enough to make restraints unnecessary. Many respondents had simply never considered the idea of restraints because they only went on short trips. Additionally, a few respondents noted that they wanted their dog to be able to put his head out the window.

### The Dangers

Beyond potentially causing accidents, there are very real dangers to allowing a pet to sit on your lap. If a crash did occur, a small pet could easily be crushed by a deployed airbag, or thrown from the car and injured or even killed. In addition, an unrestrained dog can act as a missile during a crash. AAA notes that an unrestrained 10-pound dog, where the vehicle is only traveling at 30 mph, will exert roughly 300 pounds of pressure in a crash! So, imagine the devastation that can cause to your pet and anyone in his path.

### The Solutions

States are taking notice of the potential dangers. Hawaii has made it illegal to carry a pet on one's lap while driving, and many other states have introduced, considered, or enacted legislation meant to stop drivers from traveling unsafely with pets. As a result, driving with your pet on your lap can earn you a traffic stop or a fine in some states. Even in places where there is no specific law pertaining to driving with a pet on your lap, you can still

properly secured in the back seat or cargo area of your vehicle.

There are pet restraint options in many types, sizes, and price ranges that are comfortable for dogs and still allow them some freedom of movement. The type of pet vehicle safety device you select will depend on the size, temperament, and type of pet you have. Types of pet safety devices include vehicle pet barriers, pet car and SUV seats, pet vehicle safety barriers, soft-sided pet carriers, and hard-sided pet travel crates and kennels.

No matter which pet vehicle safety device you decide is best for your pet, it's very important that you take the time to get your pet used to it. For example, if you choose a pet travel crate/kennel, you can set up the kennel inside of your home and let your pet go in and out of the kennel until he or she is comfortable with it. In the end, the financial and time investment in a vehicle pet safety device is well worth it, especially if it means peace of mind for you, and safety for your furry family members.

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