

# Should I bring my dog hiking and/or camping?

1. **Should I bring my dog?**
2. **Do I have to keep my dog leashed?**
3. **Do I have to pick up dog waste?**
4. **Can my dog handle the challenge of the trail?**
5. **Can I leave my dog in camp while I go hiking?**
6. **Interacting with other trail users**
7. **What if my dog barks?**
8. **During my visit to the National Forest, can I let my dog live off the land?**
9. **I leave plenty of food in the bowl at home for my dog. She eats whenever she likes. Can't I do that while I'm camping on the Cibola?**
10. **Won't my dog protect me against wild animals?**
  - Ticks
  - Snake bites
  - Pet First Aid Kits
  - Other Helpful tips



**Should I bring my dog?** If you plan to bring your dog with you to the national forest, first familiarize yourself with trail situations that can be hazardous for a dog, for the hiker, or for other trail users. Be sensitive to other visitors who are uncomfortable around a dog they do not know—especially large dogs. Unless your dog responds well to voice commands and is comfortable around people, keep it leashed while in parking lots and at busy trailheads.

**Do I have to keep my dog leashed?** Many hikers enjoy taking their dogs along on the trail, whether for a day hike or backpacking. National forest guidelines require that dogs be on a six-foot leash at all times when in developed recreation areas and on interpretive trails. There are no leash requirements in the general forest areas.

Even though you're far away from sidewalks and city streets, there will still be times when you need to keep your dog on a leash. This is especially important when you're close to other campers who may not be dog lovers, or when you're in an area where your dog could wander off a path and encounter wildlife. Update all vaccinations and provide flea and tick control for your pet. Also, make sure your dog has his identification tags on (or is microchipped) in case he gets lost. You should also bring along a recent photo should you need to show other campers or a ranger if your dog goes missing.

Be very cautious in areas with cliffs, gulches, canyons, caves, big rocks, etc. Many dogs have no concept of heights, and they can slip under railings. Keep your dog close to you. Bring a short, sturdy leash for hiking. If you're hiking in terrain with cliffs, canyons, big rocks or other challenging conditions, it may be safest to attach the leash to a sturdy harness instead of a neck collar.

**Do I have to pick up dog waste?** Of course. Most federal, state and county litter laws require it. Dog waste can spread disease to wild animals and it can contaminate water. Picking up dog waste is also just common courtesy to the campers, picnickers or the hikers.

## Can my dog handle the challenge of the trail?

**Dog Aerobics!** We expect our dogs to naturally stay fit even though they may get only a short walk once or twice a day. Dogs—like people—need to build up their endurance before they join you on a lengthy trail. You might want to take several short hikes to slowly build up your dog's endurance, especially if you want it to carry a pack. A dog that does not get much exercise on a regular basis will tire quickly and be susceptible to dehydration. Also, all trails have rocky surfaces, so a dog that is used to walking on rugs at home and on grassy surfaces when outside may soon be limping from damaged paws. There are a variety of booties available to protect your dog's feet from injury.

**Combating Dehydration.** Dogs can easily become dehydrated, so offer water to your dog before you start. Many trails have no water sources, so bring water with you and frequently offer it to your dog. A panting dog is rapidly losing water. Never rely on finding a spring or a stream as a water source for your dog. Familiarize yourself with the symptoms and treatment of dog heat stroke or heat exhaustion.

**Avoid *Giardia spp.*. What's that?** *Giardia spp.* are parasitic protozoans (single celled organisms) found in the intestines of many animals, including dogs. Sometimes called "Beaver Fever," *Giardia* is transmitted from host to host ingesting cysts in contaminated feed or drinking water. Cysts may also be found in streams or other water sources.

If your dog drinks from a native stream or pond, watch for symptoms that can appear within 1-2 weeks of ingestion. Dogs can carry the disease and show no symptoms or may have mild recurring diarrhea to acute explosive diarrhea. Other signs associated with giardia, are weight loss, listlessness, mucus in the stool, and anorexia. These signs are also associated with other intestinal tract diseases, and are not specific to giardia. ***Giardia can infect humans.*** If you think your dog may have been infected, see your vet. To avoid the risk of your dog being infected, take plenty of clean water for your dog so it won't have to drink from native streams. A leash comes in handy to keep dogs from drinking from streams.

**Can I leave my dog in camp while I go hiking?** No! Not even for a few minutes. State and county laws prohibit animal cruelty and abandonment. Some animal cruelty laws prevent you from chaining your dog. You can confine your dog in a suitable crate or in a portable kennel, but you must remain present. Also, on warm days, place the kennel or crate in the shade. **Never** leave your dog alone in a car because a car quickly becomes an oven that can injure or kill your pet.

**Interacting with Other Trail Users.** Most of the trails on the Cibola are open to horseback riding, so you and your dog must be prepared to meet these trail users. Your dog may run ahead on a steep and rocky trail, round a turn and startle an equestrian and cause the rider to be thrown before you have a chance to intervene. Trail etiquette requires hikers to yield to equestrians. On a narrow trail, even a dog that is held close on a short leash can unnerve a horse. Encourage your dog to remain calm and to sit as horses pass.

Other dogs hiking the trail may act aggressively toward your dog. This can result in injury to both animals. Ensure that your dog responds well to voice commands. Keeping it on a leash will work to avoid conflicts of this type.

**What if my dog barks?** An occasional bark can be expected, but dogs that bark uncontrollably are even more annoying in a quiet wilderness setting than in an urban environment. If your dog barks uncontrollably, don't bring it camping with you. In developed campgrounds, excessive noise after 10:00 p.m. is prohibited. A barking dog after hours in a campground can get its owner a hefty citation. At night, your dog is probably best kept inside your tent.

## **During my visit to the national forest, can I let Rover live off the**

**land?** No! While a dog may drink from a stream, you should always carry enough clean water with you for your dog, and you should remember to share your water with your dog whenever you drink. It is not advisable to let a dog drink from a stagnant pool or puddle.

Also, feed your dog as you would at home. Don't allow your dog to forage or hunt. Aside from the fact that doing so is prohibited by leash and game laws, a dog unused to such a dangerous environment will usually be injured (or worse) by such things as cactus, rattlesnakes, scorpions, desert heat, cliffs, flooded washes, bears, and mountain lions.

Further, if you think losing a dog in your neighborhood is bad (and it is), it's much worse to lose a dog in the middle of a remote wilderness. Dogs lost in the wild have little chance of surviving. If you lose your dog, contact animal control for the appropriate county.

## **I leave plenty of food in the bowl for my dog at home. She eats whenever she likes. Can't I do that while I'm camping on the**

**Cibola?** No. This feeding procedure may work at home, but that's because you probably don't have 300 pound black bears wandering through your house. Bears love dog food. Leaving dog food in a bowl will likely invite a visit by a hungry bear to your campsite. Just as you should never leave any human food unsecured, lock up the dog food in a bear-proof container or hang the dog food (and all other food and scented items) high in a tree that is well away from your campsite.

**Won't my dog protect me against wild animals?** Most dogs will sound an alarm when they sense nearby wildlife. It is also true that many dogs will defend their owners if necessary. And despite the occasional heart-warming story of a dog saving her owner from a bear attack, the fact is a single dog—no matter what the breed or how large—is no match for a hungry bear or lion. Even these heart-warming stories often end in tragedy for the dog.

A dog that chases squirrels in a park may try to chase wild animals in the forest. Most wild animals will outrun the dog, but if the dog runs far enough, it may become lost. A bear may run over a hill then turn and kill the dog with one swipe of its five-inch long claws. A bear with young cubs may attack immediately. A sick fox with distemper or rabies may be unable to run, but can still bite. Also, remember that skunks are common visitors to campsites, and they seem to take special delight in spraying curious puppies. So, unless you brought five gallons of tomato juice with you to neutralize the skunk odor, the ride home with Lucky in the back seat will be quite memorable.

**Ticks.** There are plenty of ticks in the forest, so check yourself and your dog carefully. A bite that develops a large red circle or a "bull's eye" of concentric circles, may be from a tiny deer tick. Dear ticks can carry diseases, so you should consult a doctor.

**Snake Bites.** A rattlesnake will usually coil up facing the dog, and make a loud buzzing sound. If the dog challenges the snake, the snake may strike. If the dog steps on the snake before it coils, the dog's hindquarters may be struck. A dog with a large dose of venom may die before you can get it to the vet. If your dog is bitten by a snake, immobilize the body part that has been bitten. Keep it at or below the level of the heart. Keep the pet calm and still. Carry the pet if possible. Get to a vet as soon as possible, and try to identify the type of snake. Do not manipulate the bitten area any more than necessary. Do not cut over the fang marks. Do not ice pack or tourniquet the area.

**Pet First Aid Kit.** Here are some useful items for treating pet emergencies in the field.

1. A clean tube sock for wrapping around the head to secure a lacerated ear.
2. A bandana for a makeshift muzzle.
3. Flat-bladed tweezers and a small container of mineral oil for tick removal.
4. An emergency fold-up blanket (space blanket) for treating shock, cold or, for smaller dogs, even carriage.
5. A folding tool that has needle-nose pliers for extracting a large thorn or a porcupine quill.
6. A small container of hydrogen peroxide. When mixed with baking soda, water and liquid soap, will cut the aroma of skunk perfume. Keep the mix away from the dog's eyes.
7. Booties for protecting injured paws. They can also be used to help to prevent ice and snow build-up between the toes.
8. Vaccination and rabies certification. This may keep your dog out of the pound should he happen to bite someone.
9. A small first aid book with instructions for treating pets.
10. The name, phone number and directions of a nearby veterinarian or pet emergency clinic

### **Other helpful tips**

- Make sure you pack plenty of water.
- You may be on a vacation, but don't take a break from grooming your dog, so bring along your dog's brush or comb.
- Pack plenty of plastic bags so you can clean up after your dog.
- Never leave your dog outside alone.
- Don't leave your dog's food out when he's not eating. It could attract unwanted insects or wildlife.
- Keep your dog quiet. Frequent and continued barking disturbs the wildlife and other campers.
- Try to get a site with some shade for your dog.

### **Conclusion**

- We all love our canine friends and we want to take them with us wherever we go. Although it may be fine to exercise Scruffy on a trail or at a picnic during the daylight when the weather is appropriate, camping with a dog – especially a dog that is unused to wild surroundings – can be a significant challenge for the owner, the dog and other campers within earshot.
- As a rule, if you have not previously introduced your buddy to the wild with many day hikes and picnics, don't bring him camping.
- Also as a rule, if your dog is boisterous and poorly behaved at home, a camping trip will not improve the dog's behavior. You'll do him -- and any nearby campers -- a favor by leaving him at home.
- Finally, please remember that wild areas can be very dangerous places for dogs. Use great care when bringing your pet with you.