

Have Pets, Will Travel



Retired racing greyhounds courtesy of Homstretch Greyhound Rescue and Adoption, homstretchgreyhounds.org.

Can't bear being away from your four-legged family member? Here's how to make the trip more enjoyable — for everyone

■ DENA HARRIS

The first time Helen Turner of Circleville, Ohio, went to Florida, she and her husband, Forrest, placed their Lhasa apso in a kennel. "It was a terrible experience," recalled Turner. "When we picked her up, her hair was so matted we had to shave her. We vowed we'd never leave her again." The Turners solved the problem by purchasing a Holiday Rambler Navigator coach. "The motorhome makes it convenient to take Muffin with us," said Turner. "She's like our child. We can't leave her."

Pet ownership has been on the rise in the



United States for the last 10 years — just as the ownership of recreation vehicles has reached record levels. What this means is that more RV owners aren't willing to be separated from

their pets. However, not every pet is suited for road travel — and even those that are sometimes require an adjustment period. If you're thinking of traveling with your pet,

the tips below will help to ensure a smooth ride.

Preparing Your Pet

Aliza Sherman had never RVed before she packed her two Chihuahuas into a 1977 Dodge Apache for a tour of America. "I lived in New York City and my dogs were 'Manhattan dogs,'" explained Sherman. "Their only travel was when I'd sneak them into a cab in a Sherpa bag." Also, Sherman's dogs were older, with health problems. Sherman spent some time introducing them to

Cool Pet Products

According to a recent survey taken by *Kampgrounds of America (KOA)*, one in three RVers takes a pet on the road. With that in mind, we've assembled a few products sure to draw the interest of at least one-third of *MotorHome Magazine* readers ... but we suspect that there are more pet-lovers out there that haven't been surveyed! — Bruce Hampson



Hammacher Schlemmer is known for unique travel gifts, so it's not surprising that the popular mail-order company would branch out to include four-legged travelers. The octagonal-shaped **Pet Playpen** (Part No. 72039) provides ample exercise room (it's 56 inches

high with a 62½-inch diameter), has mesh walls, an easily cleaned floor and a roof of Sunbrella weather- and UV-resistant material.

Want to exercise your cat? The company also offers a 5-foot-tall **Safe Cat Climber** (Part No. 10819) that hooks onto the back of a door and increases a cat's roaming space indoors. Made of tight-weave PVC mesh, the climber offers cats five separate lounging levels.



Murphy Beds have been used for decades in space-restricted studio apartments. Now, *FunStuffForDogs.com* offers a Fido-sized version, capable of accommodating pets up to 200 pounds. Closed, the **Murphy Bed** takes up just 10 × 24 inches of floor space; open, the 4-inch-thick covered foam mattress measures a full 24 × 36 inches. It comes with a removable washable cover and hardware for permanently mounting against a wall, if desired; available in natural, black or mahogany finish.

Another pet sleeping solution is the **Flexcot Pet Cot**, available in sizes from Medium through XXL, for pets up to 95 pounds. Easily assembled/disassembled by flexing the spring steel legs, the Pet Cot features a rust-resistant frame, stable three-legged design and durable polyester-fabric bed; the XLCC model is designed to fit in a corner. Available in forest green or royal blue.



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RV travel. “Learning to pee on grass instead of concrete was a big thing,” recollected Sherman. “I took some short trips to get them used to the vehicle and different environments.”

Kathryn Hopper did the same before traveling with her cat, Fritz. While preparing the RV, Kathryn would take Fritz in with her. “I’d take some treats, play with him, turn the motor on ... I even napped with him in the RV,” said Hopper. “I wanted to make it a pleasurable place associated with treats before my trip even began.”

One easy way to quickly increase your pet’s comfort level with the new surroundings is to stock your RV with familiar items — blankets, toys, food dishes — anything that carries the scent of home. Younger dogs and cats may take to road travel quicker than older pets, especially cats, who are very routine-oriented.

Of course, some RV owners go to great lengths to outfit their motorhome for the ease and conven-



Lost & Found

No matter how attentive you are, there may come a time when a pet simply wanders off. You can minimize your grief by ensuring that, at minimum, your pet is wearing a collar with as much information as possible on the tag — and make sure that the phone number listed is your cell number, not your home. Along with this, have your pet microchipped, a process which injects a tiny capsule (about the size of a grain of rice) under the skin. The chip carries a digital number that can be read by a vet’s scanner and lead to the pet’s return.

Here are a few other tips:

- Stay calm and remain in the area. If your pet doesn’t return immediately, you may be there for a few days or even a week. But stay where your smell is strongest to the animal, creating a home base for them to return to.
 - Have one person remain with the RV in case the pet returns while others comb the area.
 - Take scented items with you, such as a blanket or clothes, to help your pet recognize you. Food may also tempt them out of hiding.
 - Travel with a recent photo of your pet so you can make flyers to post in neighboring areas.
 - Contact nearby shelters and animal enforcement agencies to let them know your pet is missing.
 - Beware of scam artists. People who see reward flyers will call and say they have your animal but need you to send money so they can return the animal to you. Ask if they’re willing to take the animal to a police station or shelter to verify it’s your pet.
 - The Internet also can be a valuable place for posting and locating information on lost pets. At fidofinder.com, you can register your dog and fit it with a tag carrying a FidoFinder ID number. The Web site at petharbor.com connects the public with data kept by such organizations as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), Humane Society and local Animal Control Agencies. At pets911.com, you can report a lost pet and search its database to see if one matching your description and location turns up. Other similarly helpful sites include petclub.org, which claims to be the largest non-profit lost-and-found service in the United States and Canada, petfinder.com and tabbytracker.com.
- Keep in mind that some sites charge for their services while others, like missingpet.net, are free. — Dena Harris & Bruce Hampson

Cool Pet Products



If your dog or cat has fur, it’s going to shed — and in the tight confines of a motorhome, this is one drawback that demands constant vigilance.

For pet owners who swear by tape as the best medium for removing hair, **StickySheets** offers huge 23 × 35-inch sheets of sticky adhesive plastic that can tuck in, around and over all the hiding places of an RV. Just peel off the backing, press it on and rip it off to remove embedded pet hair, lint and dirt. Available in a package of 24 sheets — a combined surface area claimed larger than 22 adhesive lint rollers!



Dogs, like humans, tend to get restless when cooped up for too long. The solution is as close as the walking leash — but at night, it can be tough to juggle the leash, a flashlight

and whatever else you take along. The **Puplight**, from CPA Systems incorporates three AAA battery-powered ultra-bright LEDs that are said to illuminate the walkway for up to 200 feet in front and 70 feet to either side. Weighing just 2½ ounces, the light attaches with an adjustable elastic band that hangs freely from the pet’s existing collar, and its rim shields the light from the dog’s eyes. Available in red, silver, blue or black.

Have Pets, Will Travel



Tag & Release

Track your pets no matter where you travel

■ GORDON WEST

It's the fear of every pet owner on the move: You open the door to your coach after settling into a new area, and your dog or cat, used to the great outdoors, scampers past your outstretched arms — into a completely foreign environment. Fortunately, most pets will answer to their master's voice, though it may take a while. First, however, you need to know in which direction they bolted.

That's where a simple low-cost radio tag and radio-tag receiver puts your animal on track.

Wildlife agencies have been using radio tags to track the migration of



PHOTOS: GORDON WEST

eagles, falcons, condors, foxes, turtles and even whales. The consumer radio tags, available through Communications Specialists Inc., weigh as little as 1/8-ounce (including

battery), are smaller than the diameter of a nickel and continuously transmit for 30 days. Their range to a companion receiver is typically one-half mile around a campground, slightly less in high-density locales; maximum range capabilities to the tiny transmitters could be up to several miles on a direct line-of-sight basis.

The company actually offers two pet transmitters. For cats, the LoCATor is a tiny transmitter attached to a brightly colored collar. Dogs can also use the \$49.95 LoCATor (or the equally unobtrusive universal dog/pet/child

continued on page 110

ience of their pets, including removing side sofas or dining tables and replacing them with doggy crates and beds. Wire crates are often favored, as they allow you to see your pet and can be stacked and secured with clips or wire wraps. Most RV travelers allow their animals to roam free while traveling, but ideally a crate should always be used.

Before traveling, dog writer and trainer September Morn advises clients that dogs need to be able to potty while on a leash. She also recommends hopping in the dinghy vehicle with your dog before your trip and driving up the street to let him potty. "A lot of dogs have to be taught it's OK to potty away from their familiar spaces," said Morn. "Dogs are smell-oriented — and climbing out of a car and being hit with new smells can be overwhelming."

Small dogs that are paper-trained or cats with their litter boxes are a bit easier. Cathy Mikołajczyk of Delaware travels with

Cool Pet Products



The time your pet needs you most is when it's older — and traveling is harder. America's Pet Store offers a number of different type ramps to help older or arthritic pets into the coach and even up onto more comfortable surroundings. The **X-Large Scamp Ramp** is a modular, free-standing ramp 27 × 64 inches (and 16 inches wide) and will support up to 50 pounds. Fabricated from dense poly foam and covered with a washable cloth cover, the ramp weighs just 15 pounds.



If you travel with a pet, you need to know basic pet first aid — injuries, accidents and emergencies don't happen at the vet's office during working hours. To make it easier, Mountain Moms assembled more than 40 items — ranging from eye wash and styptic powder to diotame tablets and even an emergency blanket — and created the **First-Aid & Travel Kit for Dogs**. The items, which are said

to have been selected with the help of a veterinarian, are bundled in a handy nylon pack that, when closed, measures just 7 × 7 × 5 inches.

Have Pets, Will Travel

10 cats in her 2001 Jayco Class C coach. She places the litter box in the shower and uses bungee cords to hold the door back. Another idea to adapt litter boxes for travel is to drill holes around the edges, then use large notebook rings to hook the sides of the box to an open cage, making it difficult for the box to tip over.

For owners that leave food out while traveling, plastic non-skid mats and bowls are a must. Pet stores stock lipped water bowls to prevent water from sloshing out. However, many pet owners find that their pets prefer to eat only once the vehicle stops.

Morn recommends that pets be fed regular meals. "On the road, your pets may not have their normal appetite, but with food always available you may not notice this for several days," she explained. She also suggests RV owners carry their own water. "Dogs are finicky about water flavors. You want to make sure they stay hydrated."

Sick Puppy?

Be prepared in case your pet requires medical attention while on the road. Morn recommends traveling with a complete first-aid kit and manual. "What if you're away from home and out of cell phone range? You should be able to take care of most first-aid emergencies yourself."

Sherman's first-aid kit for her dogs includes a thermometer, tweezers, flea collar, toothbrush, digestive enzyme supplement, a natural wax to protect paws from bad

Coach Clinic

Pet hospitals on wheels can be a real asset to RVers with a sick animal

■ DWIGHT AND MARGARET LANE



Steve and Beth Egelhofer have put 9,400 miles on their Class C-style mobile pet clinic making local house calls. The unit is equipped with the latest high-tech equipment.

While pet owners can successfully treat their four-legged companions for a variety of minor ailments while traveling, there may come a time when replacing your dog's electrolyte or soothing an upset tummy just isn't enough. Fortunately, mobile animal hospitals are becoming more common in towns and cities all across the country. They can be a real boon for RVers with a sick animal — it's no fun to have to break camp, then hunt through the streets of a strange city for a vet, especially with a large motorhome.

Steve and Beth Egelhofer are typical of veteran animal doctors who heard the call of the road and managed to adapt their vocations to fit their new lifestyle. Steve, a veteri-

RVing With Pets

■ BRUCE HAMPSON

Traveling with pets is essentially a "learn by doing" endeavor, but sooner or later, you're going to have to find someplace to park — and when you do, the outside environs need to be as pet-friendly as the

interior of your coach.

That isn't always the case. Many private and public campgrounds have strict limitations on the number or size of pets they will allow, while others don't let pets on

their property under any circumstances. Even campgrounds that are seemingly amenable to four-legged guests can't always be described as "pet friendly."

"A pet-friendly park makes us welcome by

Have Pets, Will Travel

PHOTOS: DWIGHT LANE



narian for 33 years, and Beth, a registered veterinary technician, embarked on their new venture just three years ago. Today, they can call it a huge success.

“People love the convenience,” Beth said. “Families with babies or young children are especially appreciative of the service. So are seniors who have transportation problems.” The Egelhofers can pull right up to a client’s house or, in the case of RVers, their space at a local campground. After treatment, a family pet is already in familiar surroundings — vastly reducing the fear and trauma many animals feel in unknown territory.

This is always helpful following surgery. “Most animals wake very quickly after anesthesia,” Steve noted, “and they’re confused about where they are.” And,

his 24-foot “clinic” isn’t rife with the usual sounds, sights and smells of a typical pet hospital. Here, the atmosphere is intimate and calming. Owners are invited to come in and watch during an exam or treatment. This, too, helps reassure a skittish animal.

Going Mobile

Some years ago, Steve sold the animal hospital in Felton, California, that he had owned for many years. He continued to practice as a relief veterinarian in several surrounding cities, but finally got weary of wasting long hours every week in commuter traffic. It was pure serendipity that around this same time Beth retired from her work as an instructional aide in a local school. Both were ready to fashion a new future for themselves.

As long-time RVers who’ve been camping ever since their teenage children were little, the Egelhofers were familiar — as all RVers are — with the important advantage of having everything you need within reach. This was one part of the equation. Add to that a

much simpler notion: both love animals. As the kids were growing up, there were always pets in their home — at a minimum, a couple of dogs and two or three cats. It helps, too, that Steve and Beth have always enjoyed working together since the day they first met. So the idea of having a mobile animal hospital wasn’t out of the realm of possibility. Comparing notes, they agreed it had great appeal.

They named their future mobile clinic Beneath the Redwoods Veterinary Service, since their home is near a magnificent redwood grove. As a long-time professional, Steve was determined that their new hospital-on-wheels meet the highest standard. After much research, they selected the La Boit Company of Columbus, Ohio, to put together a unit that would meet Steve’s exacting requirements.

Today, if you walk through the small, 24-foot hospital that resembles nothing so much as a typical Class C coach, you’re immediately dazzled by how much has been packed into this limited space. In addition to the usual gray-

continued on page 109

ground, toothpaste, vitamins, a syringe, toenail clippers, pill grinder, disinfectant, vitamin E skin oil, hydrogen peroxide and a disposable razor to shave away hair in case of injury.

Hopper, whose cat is asthmatic, travels with a full copy of her cat’s medical file — a good idea regardless of your pet’s health. It’s also wise to travel with extra prescriptions and always carry proof of rabies vaccination; there are places where your pet can be impounded without this document.

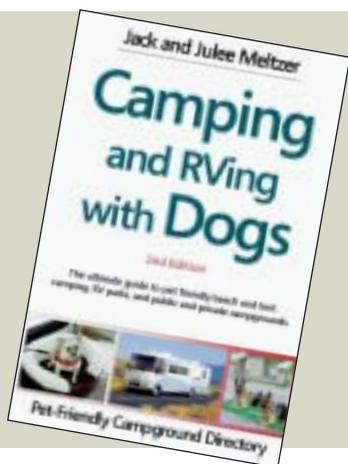
Finally, Hopper and Morn advise checking in with your vet if you’re traveling to a new area. Some states might require different vaccinations and Hopper, who travels between the United States and Canada, notes some lab stats are different between countries.

There are certain lock-down procedures RV travelers are comfortable with. Dishes, bedding and food must be secured before getting underway. Traveling with pets adds one more item to the checklist: roll call.

“We do a headcount every time we get in and out of the RV,” said Mikolajczyk with her 10 cats. Even Hopper with her one cat calls “Fritz?” and waits for the answering meow before she’ll exit the RV. All it takes is one slip of vigilance — a loose window screen, the door left open a half-minute too long — for pets to slip outside, unseen.

To give your dogs a break, travel with an exercise pen. These collapsible, easy-to-set up pens open and expand in a matter

continued on page 108



giving us clear, reasonable rules of responsibility for control and care of our pets on arrival, and by enforcing those rules consistently throughout our stay,” noted one pet owner when responding to a query of pet-friendly parks posted to rv.net.

“We don’t expect excessive rules, like ‘Dogs are not allowed to relieve themselves in any campsite,

including yours, but ONLY in this designated area,’ or ‘Pet owners must have clean-up bags in hand and visible at all times.’ Over-regulation just tells us we are tolerated, not welcomed, when we travel with our pets.”

“You have to ask specific questions of the campground,” another pet owner responded. “We stayed in

continued on page 108

Have Pets, Will Travel

continued from page 45

of minutes, allowing your dogs outside space to romp. Cats may be taken out as long as they are on a harness, and many people who travel with birds will set a cage outside.

Above all, be respectful of other campers when traveling with your pets — not everyone is an animal lover. Clean up after your pets and check to make sure the campsite you're heading to accepts animals. Also, be aware of breed-specific legislation. Morn, who travels with two Rottweilers, two American Eskimo dogs and a small mixed-breed, noted, "There are certain cities where I can't take my Rottweilers out of the vehicle, because it would be illegal for them to set foot on the ground."

Granted, the obvious answer is to simply travel elsewhere, but with the litany of requirements necessary to hit the road with a pet, some might wonder: Is it worth all the bother?

"Absolutely," said Hopper. "I take Fritz with me because that way I know he gets the very best care."

"We enjoy their company," chimed in Debra Trace of traveling with her two Weimaraners. "Plus, I like always knowing where they are and how they're doing."

However, it was Aliza Sherman who may have summed up the emotions of many a traveling pet lover. "Leaving them behind isn't an option. I can't part with them. I love them." ■

RVing With Pets

continued from page 45

one campground in New York that advertised pets as OK — but when you get there you find the dogs have to stay on your site and may not under any circumstances leave the site."

Another irritation among pet owners is the added charge that is oftentimes levied by a park when accepting pets. As one enthusiast stated, "I don't believe campgrounds should charge extra for pet facilities since I am already paying for other amenities that I don't use, such as arcades." Most pet owners readily accept any cost increases, however, particularly when visiting a park that offers features designed specifically for pets.

"My favorite campground right now is Austin Lake in Toronto, Ohio," wrote one owner. "We will typically get a stream site and Quincy (his Jack Russell terrier) goes to town playing in the water. They also have what they call the 'Bowser Swimming Area' — where they encourage you to take your dog to swim in the lake." At Ocala RV Ranch in Ocala, Florida, another pet-lover was impressed by the wealth of pet accommodations, ranging from a dog run — complete with fireplug — to a dog bath. "I

thought it was a hot tub until I got up close!" he said.

"We don't have a dog," he admitted, "but it was nice to see a park that catered to them."

Among those parks truly deserving of the pet-friendly label, another service is fast becoming popular with owners: pet sitting.

"We found one campground in New Orleans (New Orleans West KOA) that offered the service, which allowed us to sightsee all day," enthused one owner. "They were great and gave a report on the dog when we got back. Thanks to another (Florida's Titusville KOA), we could tour the NASA - Kennedy Space Center all day and relax because someone was checking on our dog. We don't mind paying for it — it is well worth it!"

Among other parks specifically cited for a pet-friendly atmosphere were Frontier Town (Ocean City, Maryland); 3 Seasons Resort (Rehoboth Beach, Delaware); Tom's Cove Park (Chincoteague Island, Virginia); Pirateland and Lakewood Camping Resort (both in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina); and the San Francisco North/Petaluma KOA in California.

Coach Clinic

continued from page 45

and black-water holding tanks, an air conditioner and an unusually quiet AC generator, the unit has everything a full-size vet clinic can offer — including the latest high-tech equipment. There is a blood chemistry machine that can give an immediate reading, a surgery suite with anesthesia, a film-processing lab for X-rays — and on and on. Seems nearly impossible, but it's all there.

The Egelhofers have treated hundreds of pets — including rats, hamsters and guinea pigs — in their clinic. But a large Newfoundland dog, brought to them in April of last year, was the most puzzling case they've had. The dog had eaten nothing for days and appeared to be at death's door.

Desperate to save it, Steve performed emergency surgery — and was amazed to find a huge cork lodged in the dog's stomach. "That's the cork from the bottle of wine we opened at Christmas!" the stunned owner told them. How the big Newfoundland survived from December to April is anybody's guess, but today he's as healthy and frisky as a puppy.

While the Egelhofers' service is limited to California's San Lorenzo Valley, Santa Cruz and Scotts Valley, mobile veterinarians can be found in most major (and many minor) metropolitan areas; just check the telephone book or your Internet search engine. Without moving your rig, you can usually arrange for a house call. ■

"Our park has a dog-walking area around the park, convenient potty-disposal units, a run-free area and dog contests," noted the KOA park's owner, Pauline Wood. The park even hands out dog biscuits to pooches upon arrival.

However, the standard in four-legged friendliness may have been set by Four Paws Kingdom in Rutherfordton, North Carolina.

"In addition to the normal features you'd find at a full-hookup resort, it has large, separate fenced-in off-leash areas for big dogs and small dogs, with fresh water, pools and toys," wrote dog owner Donna Kennedy. "There is an agility yard with equipment for those dogs who want to 'work out,' and the park owner is an agility trainer who is happy to help you if your dog has never tried it before.

"There's also a spring-fed pond with grass and sand for cooling off and rolling around, along with hiking trails, and a 'doggy bath house' with do-it-yourself grooming equipment. They also have many planned events for dogs (and owners) to enjoy, from theme weekends with games to talent contests and training sessions.

"We planned to be there for a couple of weeks," she added, "and ended up staying for more than two months!"

As noted in *Camping and*

RVing With Dogs, authors Jack and Julee Meltzer admit that "It should be easy to figure out which campgrounds accept dogs and which don't. However, as a practical matter, the task can be surprisingly complicated." Fortunately, the Meltzers have done a lot of the legwork; along with some great traveling tips, health hints and camping caveats, the recently published book (2005, by Desert Winds Press) is chock-full of pet-friendly campgrounds. Indeed, the directory portion comprises 236 of the book's 314 pages.

Another excellent source is the *Trailer Life RV Parks, Campgrounds and Services Directory*. The directory lists campground pet restrictions by animal size, breed and quantity, and notes that "[pet] restrictions at campgrounds are the exception rather than the rule."

The Internet also offers plenty of resources, though it's harder to sort through some of the claims. You might also pick up a few tips by subscribing to *Fido Friendly*, called the "Travel Magazine For You and Your Dog." Similarly, the *DogGone Newsletter* is said to be filled with locations you can travel to with your pets — and a subscription allows you access to the newsletter's Internet database of more than 35,000 dog-friendly lodging, restaurant and vacation destinations.

Tag and Release

continued from page 43

transmitter) but since they are more prone to running and covering more ground, the company also offers a larger collar (Part No. PT-1D, \$99.95).

The tiny transmitters operate on specific low-power frequencies at 218 MHz. Transmitter pulse is only 20 milliseconds, one second pulse-repetition rate. This extremely short pulse length allows more power to go into the radiated signal for increased detection range; it also allows the common lithium button-cell battery to last for more than 30 days of continuous signaling. If you have more than one pet, each collar transmitter can be ordered on a separate channel.

Of course, you will also have to purchase a receiver to pick up those signals. The receiver is sized like a small transistor radio, with phase-locked loop channel selection for up to 100-channel operation. Priced from \$199.95 to \$299.95 (depending upon the number of channels needed), the receiver has a built-in speaker, built-in signal-strength meter and is supplied with a unity gain rubber antenna. Multi-channel receivers come with a simple channel selector switch.

Tracking down the radio tag simply involves turning on the receiver, listening for the telltale chirp sound, and walking in a direction that will intensify the signal strength meter reading and sound. When the needle on the receiver is pegged, you are within a foot or so of the activated transmitter — and your pet. This is a nice feature that can be used in the coach, as well. If you have a big motorhome, panic can overtake you when you leave a rest stop, only to quickly discover the cat is missing. Just flip the switch to turn the receiver on — the pounding signal will immediately indicate if the pet is hiding inside the coach, playing the typical motorhome hide-and-go-seek.

If you want to go high-tech, for an additional \$40 you can order the matching rectangular directional antenna, which will absolutely detect a signal peak in the direction of where the transmitter is located. At a recent

Tag and Release

get-together in Quartzite, Arizona, a dog tagged with a radio collar wandered away in the middle of the night through a partially open side door — and had walked so far away that the little local rubber antenna couldn't pick up a thing. We added the directional antenna, and to the relief of everyone, a tiny signal was picked up in the direction of the local Quartzite mountains. We jumped in a dinghy, and drove, and drove ... and drove. It wasn't until we got to the base of the mountains that the signal strength began to noticeably climb. Finally, after going up a dirt road, we found the by-then very tired puppy — lost, scared and heading in the wrong direction.

By the way, you can also order additional tags to monitor your kids while out in the woods. Not much bigger than a dime, they can be added to a keyfob, tossed in a pocket or hooked onto a belt loop. Going for

a day-long hike up in the mountains? Get a tag on the dog, and tag every trekker with their own channel transmitter. Unlike GPS, the little trackers don't require a view of GPS satellites and the sky. Mark your campsite with a tracker, and always be able to know when you are headed back in the right direction. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

AMERICA'S PET STORE

(800) 870-1941,
AMERICAS-PET-STORE.COM.

BENEATH THE REDWOODS VETERINARY SERVICE

(831) 335-3985,
REDWOODMOBILEVET.COM.

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALISTS
(800) 854-0547, COM-SPEC.COM.

CPA SYSTEMS/PUPLIGHTS
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