

TRAVEL

Study: Drivers Are Dangerously Distracted By Their Dogs

By **OLIVIA B. WAXMAN** | July 22, 2011

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Unrestrained dogs can be a dangerous distraction to drivers and increase the risk of accidents, according to a survey conducted by AAA and Kurgo, a manufacturer of pet travel products. The AAA/Kurgo online poll sampled 1,000 dog owners who had driven with their pets in the last year.

(PHOTOS: Man's Best Friend, Muted)

Overall, nearly six in 10 respondents (56%) reported driving with their dogs at least once in the past month, and more alarmingly, nearly one in five drivers (19%) have taken a hand off the wheel to keep their pet from jumping into the front seat. Other doting drivers confessed to letting their dogs sit on their laps (17%), feeding them treats (13%), or snapping photos of them (3%). (If you own a dog as cute as **Boo, the Facebook sensation**, then how can you resist, right?)

That being said, 83% of drivers understand the perils of petting their pups in a moving vehicle, but only 16% use a pet restraint. Many have never considered buying one (39%). Others don't think they need the devices because they think their dogs are calm enough (42%), or they don't deem them necessary for short car rides (29%).

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But that's not an excuse, according to AAA National's Traffic Safety Programs Manager Jennifer Huebner-Davidson.

"An unrestrained 10-pound dog in a crash at only 30 mph will exert roughly 300 pounds of pressure, while an unrestrained 80-pound dog in a crash at only 30 mph will exert approximately 2,400 pounds of pressure," she said in a press release. "Imagine the devastation that can cause to your pet and anyone in its path."

So next time your dog whimpers and begs to sit up front, try to resist the puppy eyes.

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