In the light of day, I realized that the ivy lining the hotel parking lot was ivy all right, poison ivy. I figured I’d be showing the telltale bumps along my wrist within a matter of hours, since the dogs had been walking through it and I’d been lifting them in and out of their crates.

There were other hazards around the parking lot that I hadn’t seen the previous evening when I’d arrived after dark. Whoever mowed the lawn hadn’t taken time to remove trash before cutting, and the grassy area was littered with the shards of aluminum cans and glass bottles. Luckily, none of the dogs had cut a paw during their potty breaks in the dark.

Now I had a few things to add to the list of items needed for road trips with dogs.
If you told average people that you were willing to drive 12
hours, heck, sometimes two days, to hunt a smallish, hard-to-
find, hard-to-hit bird called a ruffed grouse, they’d just shake
their heads.

Chances are, you’ll be driving a distance for your grouse hunt
and traveling with your hunting dogs. It’s likely that you may
be stopping to gas up, take a break or stay overnight sometime
during your travels; and with the days growing shorter as win-
ter comes, one of those stops may be after dark. Rest areas, con-
venience stores, hotels – even the best places may be carelessly
mowed, with trash and debris just cut up along with the grass.

Using a headlamp when letting the dogs have a walk break will
make you more visible to others, but the biggest benefit is that
it will illuminate potential hazards such as broken glass or even
discarded, rotten food or an oil-slicked parking lot puddle. Your
dog’s location will be more visible to you, and others, if you also
buckle on one of the lighted collars that are available.

Before you go, practice having your dog whoa or stay inside the
crate when its door is opened, so that he/she learns to whoa or
stay until you clip on the leash. After a stint in the vehicle, your
dog may be too eager to get outside for his break; training him to
wait for the leash will add an element of safety.

**WIPES (old towels, baby wipes, chamois)**

Another thing that happened at the previously-mentioned
hotel stop is that in a matter of a few seconds, one of my dogs
dropped and rolled on a pancaked, dried, furred item that may
have been a groundhog at one time. He was very pleased with
himself; I found the stench unbearable. In that case, the hotel
management was kind enough to provide a hose, and it took sev-
eral wash and rinse cycles before he could be put back in his crate.

You may not be at a hotel, or a stop with a handy hose to use
when your dog steps in or rolls in something that stinks. Or, you
may just want to clean off wet and muddy paws before reloading
the dog. Some sort of wipe, whether it’s an old towel or chamois,
is handy to have.

Bob West takes things a lot further when re-crating a dog that’s
been out for hunting or work in the field. He calls it his “tail gate
check” and it’s a head-to-toe once-over of the dog. As he goes
over the dog, he’s checking for foreign matter such as grass awns,
and looking for cuts, abrasions or any evidence of soreness in the
joints.

Bob also advises that after the dog has been out for work and
re-crated, the owner check it again after a half hour or so. If the
dog is feeling any soreness or has been injured, that’s when it will
show up. Also, allowing the dog to loosen up a bit helps it recover
and be ready for the next day.

**PURINA FORTIFLORA**

When I traveled to hunt with my dogs last year, my older dog
knew the drill - duffels and guns packed, the atmosphere of ex-
citement - and got caught up in it. It seemed that for those two
days, he ran on adrenaline, with his pulse and respiration rate
elevated for hours.

His digestive system was a wreck. He’d eaten little, and the
atmosphere of the hunting trip had created stress for him.
Forti/Flora, a powder that is a live active culture of probiotics, was
the answer. Not only did it help his digestive upset, adding the
palatable powder to his food seemed to encourage him to chow.

But he lost a couple days of hunting, and he’s 12 . . . we both
hate for him to lose an hour of hunting! Now I know better. I start
adding the FortiFlora preventatively, before leaving for the trip.

Brian Zanghi, a research nutritionist for Nestle Purina said
that although poor gut health can be caused by illness, it can also
happen as a result of the stress and excitement of traveling. If the
dog’s gut health is compromised, a bout of diarrhea can lead to
dehydration – and definitely impact the dog’s ability to hunt.

**SQUIRT BOTTLE**

We’ve all learned about dehydration, and heard the advice -
don’t wait until you’re thirsty to drink. That’s because by the time
you feel thirsty, you’re already dehydrated.

The same is true with dogs. Yet, while we’re traveling, they may
show disinterest in getting a drink. I offer water, either after the
walk or with a crate tail, but I also make the dogs drink during a
break by using a squirt bottle.

As an aid to hydration, while on the road, Bob likes to “float
food” or, in other words, add enough water to the dog’s dry food
so that it floats. Do everything you can to make sure the dog is
getting plenty of water and is fully hydrated, he said.

**CANINE INFLUENZA**

Okay, you’re thinking, that’s all pretty easy. I’ll make up a kit
with the headlamp, wiping cloth, FortiFlora and squirt bottle.
There are so many hazards; but we can prepare for most troubles.

But what about this new strain of canine influenza? Do we
need to be concerned about that as we travel? After an initial out-
break in the Chicago area of the H3N2 flu, cases have been con-
ﬁrmed in Alabama, California, Texas, Massachusetts, New York,
Wisconsin, Michigan, New Jersey, Iowa and Indiana.

According to Cornell University Vet School, it is the young,
old, and ill dogs which are most vulnerable to get the flu and de-
teriorate into advanced problems such as pneumonia. The symp-
toms are a cough, runny nose, sneezing and a fever. It’s spread
dog-to-dog by coughing and sneezing; to date, there is no evi-
dence that it can be spread dog-to-human. There is also no vac-
cine for the H3N2 strain.

The American Veterinary Medical Association describes symp-
toms for a mild case: moist cough (sounds like kennel cough)
that persists for 10 to 30 days, lethargy, reduced appetite, fever,
sneezing and a discharge from the eyes and/or nose. Dogs should
be seen by a veterinarian because they may need supportive treat-
ment such as an antibiotic for a secondary bacterial infection, a
nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory to reduce fever or administra-
tion of fluids if the dog is becoming dehydrated.