THE ISSUE
Dogs transported unsecured in the cargo area (truck bed) of vehicles such as pick up trucks are at risk of injury if they jump or are thrown from the vehicle.

WELFARE CONCERNS
Injuries incurred by dogs falling or jumping from truck beds or falling within truck beds are less common than injuries incurred by free-roaming dogs struck by vehicles. However, like injuries resulting from vehicular strikes, truck bed injuries tend to be severe and multiple and include fractures and abrasions. A survey of veterinarians in Massachusetts found 141 practitioners (71% of those surveyed) had treated a total of 592 dogs that year that were injured as a result of riding in a truck bed. Data relating to dogs are limited, but data collected regarding human truck bed passengers indicate they are at significantly greater risk of injury and death than passengers riding in the cab. Riding in a truck bed may place dogs in contact with shifting loads sufficient to cause injuries and, if the truck bed is uncovered, expose them to road dust, debris, and heated metal surfaces.

ALTERNATIVES
Ejection from a truck bed may be prevented by use of a tether, however this introduces risks of tangling, choking, or dragging behind the vehicle. Any tether used should be short enough to retain the dog’s front and hind legs within the truck and should be combined with a tractable surface to allow the dog to remain easily within the range of the tether while the truck is in motion.

Dogs may be confined to a truck bed in a secure cage or kennel, but attention must be paid to ensuring appropriate space (sufficient to stand up and lie down, but not enough that the dog may be thrown from one side of the crate/kennel to the other), ventilation, and protection from the elements. Enclosures on a truck bed may accumulate toxic carbon monoxide and provide only limited protection in the event of an accident.

Within the truck cab a dog is subject to the same risks as a human passenger, and a safety harness can limit the dog’s ability to distract or interfere with the driver and may minimize injuries to both in the event of an accident.

LEGISLATION
Many states have banned traveling with dogs in the truck bed or require they be secured, others have legislation pending.

SUMMARY
Dogs transported in open truck beds are at risk of severe injury.
FOOTNOTES

REFERENCES