



The ultimate dog backpacking safety checklist

NatureCrank.com | Adventures with Maximus & Lady Midnight

1. Pre-trip preparation

- **Vet Clearance:** Ensure joints are healthy and heartworm/flea/tick preventatives are current.
- **Conditioning:** At least 4 weeks of increased mileage with a weighted pack.
- **Identification:** Collar tags are updated; microchip info is current.
- **Download Maps:** Offline GPS maps (and paper backups) for areas without cell service.

2. The "big five" gear essentials

- **Harness/Pack:** Properly fitted to prevent chafing (check "armpit" areas).
- **Sleep System:** Closed-cell foam pad or lightweight dog sleeping bag for ground insulation.
- **Hands-Free Leash:** Sturdy waist-belt and carabiner system.
- **Illumination:** LED collar light or reflective vest for visibility at camp.
- **Paw Care:** Booties for rough terrain and "paw balm" for recovery at night.

3. Nutrition & hydration

- **Extra Calories:** 50% more food than the standard daily serving.
- **Clean Water:** Filtration system (filter, UV, or tablets).
- **Collapsible Bowls:** Lightweight, silicone, or fabric bowls for food and water.
- **High-Value Treats:** To reward good behavior and provide quick energy bursts.

4. Trail etiquette & safety

- **Waste Bags:** Or a small trowel to bury waste 6–8 inches deep.
- **First Aid Kit:**
 - Self-adhering bandage (Vet Wrap)
 - Tweezers/Tick remover
 - Antiseptic wipes & antibiotic ointment
 - Canine-safe antihistamine (Benadryl—ask your vet for dosage)
 - Emergency "carry-out" sling (for large dogs)

5. Daily "body scan" (Do this every night at camp)

- Check between toes for "hitchhikers" (thorns, burrs, or ticks).
- Check ears and underbelly for irritation.
- Feel for heat or swelling in the joints.

- [] Ensure the dog is hydrated (gums should be pink and moist).

Pro tip from the trail

"The best piece of gear you can carry is your intuition. If your dog stops and refuses to move, don't push them. They are communicating a limit. Respect the pause, and you'll have a hiking partner for life." — Mik a.k.a. *NatureCrank*