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Inventor(s)	Kordecki; John R.

Pet container to overlay a vehicle seat

Abstract

A pet carrier useful as an open carrier and an enclosed kennel. The carrier is used in a vehicle and includes a base positioned directly onto a passenger seat, first and second side walls attached to the base, and first and second openings on the base, the first side wall, or the second side wall. The openings allow a safety harness to pass through each opening to engage and secure the carrier to the passenger seat. The base extends past a front edge of the seat. The side walls may be movable to provide access to an interior of the carrier and a stabilizing support attached to the base supports the extended portion. The carrier may include a carrier top configured to abut the first and second side walls. Use of the carrier top converts the carrier from the open carrier to a fully enclosed carrier.

Inventors: **Kordecki; John R. (Arlington Heights, IL)**

Applicant: **Kordecki; John R.** (Arlington Heights, IL)

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Primary Examiner: Perry; Monica L

Assistant Examiner: Lowery; Brittany A

Attorney, Agent or Firm: Bishop & Diehl, Ltd.

Background/Summary

RELATED APPLICATION (1) The present application claims the filing priority of U.S. Provisional Application No. 63/474,627 titled “A Dog/Pet Platform Container to Overlay a Vehicle's Seat” and filed on Aug. 30, 2022. The '627 Provisional application is hereby incorporated by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

(1) The present invention relates to a portable pet seat or container for vehicular travel. More specifically, the invention relates to a pet carrier which allows the pet to interact with other travelers in the vehicle while remaining safe and comfortable in a semi-confined space.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

(2) It is often an issue for pet owners to provide a safe, stable area for their pet while traveling. This can be particularly applicable to dogs, and especially larger dogs, as they can be a bit rambunctious during travel. This can present a problem not only for the pet, but also for other passengers within the vehicle, including the driver.

(3) Further, a typical automobile seat is designed to fit a seated human's body and, as a result, does not accommodate a dog's posture very well. To even fit on most car seats, a dog is required to sit sideways. Even when sitting sideways, the cushioning found in a typical car seat may be difficult for a four-legged animal to balance itself as the vehicle moves, especially when the pet is uncontained. Without added stability or security, these conditions can be problematic due to the dog's lack of side-to-side stability when starting and stopping.

(4) Ultimately, if the pet loses balance and falls during vehicle movement, or hits objects or passengers within the vehicle, it may result in damage to the pet, the vehicle, or other passengers. Even without causing damage, the unconstrained pet may become a distraction to the driver, which might also lead to vehicle damage, and/or passenger and pet injury.

(5) Before the present invention, containment options required pets to be caged or physically restrained during travel by constraints or other devices. These systems prevent or at the very least limit interaction with the pet, which may cause additional stress to the animal. Other devices and systems are designed to strap an animal to the seat using harnesses or the like, but these devices fail to address the seat size issue, especially as it pertains to larger dogs. Similarly, many prior art devices and systems provide an uncovered container, but none extend forward beyond the vehicle seat, and all fail to properly accommodate access to the pet seat, especially with respect to larger dogs.

(6) Finally, the systems and devices of the prior art are of a single use nature—i.e., they are limited to use as a car seat. The present system has a dual use as a car seat and pet kennel, which prevents the need to take both on overnight trips, for example.

(7) Until the invention of the present application, these and other problems in the prior art went either unnoticed or unsolved by those skilled in the art. The present system provides a stable, adjustable, universal dual purpose pet container for a vehicle and a home, with priorities focused on pet safety and comfort.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

(8) There is disclosed herein an improved pet carrier which has a dual use and avoids the disadvantages of prior devices while affording additional structural and operating advantages.

(9) The pet carrier is useful as both an open carrier and as a fully enclosed kennel. The carrier can be used in a vehicle having at least one passenger seat within the vehicle and a safety harness for securing a passenger within the at least one passenger seat. Generally speaking, the carrier comprises a base configured to be positioned directly onto the at least one passenger seat, first and second side walls attached to the base proximate the opposing side edges of the base, and first and second openings spaced apart on at least one of the base, the first side wall, and the second side wall. The openings are configured to allow the safety harness to pass through each to engage and secure the carrier to the at least one passenger seat.

(10) In a preferred embodiment, the base has opposing side edges to define a width and opposing front and rear edges to define a depth, wherein the depth of the base is greater than a depth of the at least one passenger seat such that the base extends past a front edge of the at least one passenger seat when positioned on the at least one passenger seat.

(11) In specific embodiments, at least one of the first and second side walls is movable to provide an access to an interior of the pet carrier. A hinge connecting at least one of the first and second side walls to the base may be used to allow pivoting between a closed position to an open position. At least one of the first and second side walls may be comprised of a first section and a second section, wherein only one of the first section and the second section is movable to provide access to the interior of the pet carrier.
(12) In other specific embodiments, a stabilizing support attached to the base proximate the front edge. The stabilizing support may comprise as least one leg extending opposite of the side walls.
(13) In other specific embodiments, the pet carrier may include a carrier top configured to adjoin to the first and second side walls. Use of the carrier top converts the carrier from the open carrier to a fully enclosed carrier.
(14) The disclosed carrier fulfills the need for a steady, level, solid surface for a dog, or any pet, to sit or stand on, including a solid level surface to overlay a cushioned vehicle seat for the pet to stand, sit or lay on.
(15) These and other aspects of the invention may be understood more readily from the following description and the appended drawings.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS
(1) For the purpose of facilitating an understanding of the subject matter sought to be protected, there are illustrated in the accompanying drawings, embodiments thereof, from an inspection of which, when considered in connection with the following description, the subject matter sought to be protected, its construction and operation, and many of its advantages should be readily understood and appreciated.
(2) FIG. **1** is a perspective view of an embodiment of the disclosed pet carrier as it is positioned on a vehicle seat;
(3) FIG. **2** is a perspective view of another embodiment of the disclosed pet carrier illustrating different features of the system;
(4) FIG. **3** is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. **2** illustrating use of a shoulder strap with the pet carrier;
(5) FIG. **4** is a perspective view of another embodiment of the disclosed pet carrier with additional food and water bowl features; and
(6) FIG. **5** is a perspective view of an embodiment including an optional kennel top.
DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION
(7) While this invention is susceptible of embodiments in many different forms, there is shown in the drawings and will herein be described in detail at least one preferred embodiment of the invention with the understanding that the present disclosure is to be considered as an exemplification of the principles of the invention and is not intended to limit the broad aspect of the invention to any of the specific embodiments illustrated.
(8) Referring to FIGS. **1-5**, there is illustrated at least one embodiment of a pet carrier, generally designated by the numeral **10**. The particular illustrated carrier **10** is for a vehicle rear seat. However, while all the embodiments illustrated are directed to a rear bench seat in a car, it should be understood that the principles of the invention can be more broadly applied to use in a truck, SUV, camper, boat, van, and any other similar vehicles.
(9) As can be seen in FIG. **1**, an embodiment of the disclosed carrier **10** is comprised of a base **12** and preferably three walls: first and second side walls **14**, and end wall **16**. The walls, **14** and **16**, attach about the periphery of the base **12**, and extend upward to define a containment area **20**. The containment area **20** can be almost any size to suit or match a particular pet size, but is preferably

built for medium, large, and extra-large pets.
(10) The base **12** has a width (measured side to side) and length (measured front to back) and is preferably comprised of a rigid material with a textured, non-slip surface to best accommodate pets during travel and for easy clean-up. The width of the base is preferably in the range of 18 inches to 36 inches, while the length is preferably in the range of 18 inches to 42 inches. Preferably, the base **12** length should extend approximately 7-10 inches beyond the seat edge. Similarly, the side walls **14** and end wall **16** should be of a structurally solid and rigid material. These walls, **14** and **16**, should match the relevant dimensions of the base **12** and be at least four inches tall, preferably at least six inches, and for some uses they may be up to 12 inches tall.
(11) A rear wall (not shown) may be used in alternate embodiments but is preferably omitted to provide better positioning of the carrier **10** on a seat, as illustrated in FIG. **1**. A stabilizing support **22** is attached to an underside surface of the base **12** and extends downward, in a direction opposite the side walls **14**. The stabilizing support **22** is preferably a single leg of adequate dimensions to support the front end of the carrier **10** as it extends beyond the front edge of the car seat, as described above. That is, there should be a significant length of the carrier **10** which is not supported by the car seat. To prevent rocking or tipping of the carrier **10**, the stabilizing support **22** must be long enough to reach the vehicle floor. For this reason, the stabilizing support **22** can be extendible to accommodate different seat heights. The support **22** may be made of telescoping sections, a single adjustable leg, or any other suitable method known by those of skill in the art. Further, while a single leg is suitable for most applications, multiple legs may be useful for heavier pets and/or better stability of the carrier **10**.
(12) In an alternate embodiment, the base **12** can include a slight downward angle on the extended portion to provide greater headroom for larger dogs. This would still provide a solid surface for the pet to stand, sit, and recline within the carrier, but would accommodate a dog standing forward of the seat edge.
(13) Referring now to FIG. **2**, the base **12** is shown to include two openings **24** at the rear edge. These openings **24** allow a safety belt (or safety harness) **30** to pass through and buckle the carrier **10** to the car seat. A shoulder strap **32** may also be used in securing the carrier **10**, as illustrated in FIG. **3**. If a back panel is used for the carrier **10**, the shoulder strap **32** may secure to the panel in some manner before passing through the opening **24** for coupling with a buckle.
(14) In use, the base **12** should be positioned directly onto the at least one passenger seat of the vehicle. The carrier should be preferably positioned on a back seat but may alternately be placed on a front passenger seat. As previously mentioned, the base **12** has opposing side edges to define a width and opposing front and rear edges to define a depth, with the depth of the base **12** preferably being greater than a depth of the at least one passenger seat. This means that the base **12** will extend past a front edge of the at least one passenger seat when positioned on the passenger seat.
(15) To help stabilize the carrier **10**, the stabilizing support **22** is attached to the base **12** proximate the front edge. As previously noted, the stabilizing support **22** is preferably adjustable in length. This allows the stabilizing support **22** to be extended and shortened to accommodate different seat heights. Further, the carrier **10** can be maintained at a slight rearward incline by extending the stabilizing support **22** to elevate the front edge. The incline can be more conducive to providing stability for the pet in the carrier **10**.
(16) The first and second side walls **14** attach to the base **12** proximate the opposing side edges of the base and are preferably hinged (see FIG. **2**). This allows either (or both) side wall **14** to be moved between an open position—i.e., lowered for easy access and pet entry to the carrier **10**—and a closed position. The hinged side wall **14** further allows the space to be expanded by leaving an inside side wall **14** in the down position—e.g., when the vehicle is stopped for any length of time to provide even more room for the pet. While not shown, the side walls **14** may be movable in other ways to create an opening for access, including being removable, slidable, or side hinged to open much like a car door. A locking mechanism **34** should be used to retain the side wall **14** in a closed

position during travel. While a locking pin **34** is illustrated, many different locking mechanisms would be suitable for use and are well-known by those of skill in the art.
(17) As shown in FIGS. **2-4**, the first and second side walls **14** may be divided into a first section **40** and a second section **42**, with only one of the two sections, **40** and **42**, being movable, preferably hinged to provide access to the interior of the pet carrier **10**. As with the full side walls **14**, a locking mechanism **44** should be used to retain the hinged section, **40** or **42**, in a closed position during travel. Arrow A illustrates access potential by a pet with the ability to fold down hinged section **40**, while Arrow B demonstrates the option for a pet to move to another area of the vehicle with hinged section **40** laid flat. These are features which especially accommodate larger dogs. Arrow C indicates the universal fit for the carrier **10**, allowing either side to hinge into a ramp or make a flat surface for extra room.
(18) As an alternate feature of the carrier **10**, a shelf member **46** may be attached to the upper edge of at least one of the first and second side walls **14**. The attachment may be static, or the shelf may be hinged with the capability of locking into position. The shelf member **46** has numerous functions and benefits. For example, it can be used by the confined pet as a place to lay its head during travel.
(19) With the addition of a cup holder-type opening or recess **48**, the shelf can also be used to hold water or food, as illustrated in FIG. **4**. A cap **50**, attached to the side wall **14** by a tether **52**, may even be provided to prevent spills during travel. The cap **50** can be fitted to secure over the opening/recess **48** when not being used.
(20) Returning to FIG. **2**, the shelf member **46** is illustrated to have an important additional use: as a step. When the carrier **10** is positioned and secured into a vehicle seat, the hinged portion **40** of the side wall **14** can be moved to an open position. In this position the shelf member **46** which extends on both sides of the side wall **14**, serves as a small step **56** to be used by the pet to enter the vehicle and the carrier **10**. This is a significant advantage, especially for older dogs, timid dogs, large dogs, and even small dogs, to make access to the carrier **10** very easy.
(21) Finally, as shown in FIG. **5**, the disclosed carrier **10** can double as a pet kennel by adding a top **60** configured to mate with the walls, **14** and **16**. The kennel top **60** is preferably made from common materials, such as metal wire, molded plastic, or the like, and preferably includes openings, such as door **62**, as necessary. As to mating, the top **60** can be made as simple as just lying on the carrier **10** or it can be connected by means known to those skilled in the art. The top **60** may also be designed to collapse (e.g., fold) for easy storage when not in use. The top **60** can be used on the carrier **10** any time the pet needs to be contained and limit access to the vehicle interior. Some pet owners find that their pet is calmer and less anxious when they have a confined area for at least a portion of the day, whether it is during travel or at home. The present system provides this “safe space” for pets.
(22) The matter set forth in the foregoing description and accompanying drawings is offered by way of illustration only and not as a limitation. While particular embodiments have been shown and described, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that changes and modifications may be made without departing from the broader aspects of applicants' contribution. The actual scope of the protection sought is intended to be defined in the following claims when viewed in their proper perspective based on the prior art.

Claims

1. A pet carrier for a vehicle having at least one passenger seat within the vehicle and a safety harness for securing a passenger within the at least one passenger seat, the carrier comprising: a base configured to be positioned directly onto the at least one passenger seat, the base having opposing side edges to define a width and opposing front and rear edges to define a depth, wherein the depth of the base is greater than a depth of the at least one passenger seat such that the base

extends past a front edge of the at least one passenger seat when positioned on the at least one passenger seat; first and second side walls attached to the base proximate the opposing side edges of the base; first and second openings spaced apart on at least one of the base, the first side wall, and the second side wall, wherein the openings are configured to allow the safety harness to pass through each to engage and secure the carrier to the at least one passenger seat; wherein at least one of the first and second side walls is comprised of a first section and a second section, wherein only one of the first section and the second section is connected by a hinge to the base to create a hinged section which pivots between an open position and a closed position and provides an access to and from an interior of the pet carrier when in the open position; and a shelf member attached to an upper edge of the hinged section, wherein the shelf member creates: a horizontal support surface when the hinged section is in the closed position; and a step for a pet to access and exit the carrier when the hinged section is in the open position.

2. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 1, further comprising a stabilizing support attached to the base proximate the front edge.

3. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 2, wherein the stabilizing support comprises at least one leg extending opposite of the side walls.

4. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 1, further comprising a locking mechanism to retain the at least one of the first and second side walls in a closed position.

5. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 1, wherein at least one of the first and second side walls is comprised of a first section and a second section, wherein only one of the first section and the second section is movable to provide access to the interior of the pet carrier.

6. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 1, further comprising a locking mechanism to retain the hinged section in a closed position.

7. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 1, further comprising a shelf member attached to at least one of the first side wall and the second side wall.

8. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 7, further comprising a recess in at least one shelf member attached to at least one of the first side wall and the second side wall.

9. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 1, further comprising a carrier top configured to adjoin to the first and second side walls.

10. A pet carrier for a vehicle having at least one passenger seat within the vehicle and a safety harness for securing a passenger within the at least one passenger seat, the carrier comprising: a base configured to be positioned directly onto the at least one passenger seat, the base having opposing side edges to define a width and opposing front and rear edges to define a depth, wherein the depth of the base is greater than a depth of the at least one passenger seat such that the base extends past a front edge of the at least one passenger seat when positioned on the at least one passenger seat; first and second side walls attached to the base proximate the opposing side edges of the base, wherein at least one of the first and second side walls is attached to the base by a hinge member; first and second openings spaced apart on at least one of the base, the first side wall, and the second side wall, wherein the openings are configured to allow the safety harness to pass through each to engage and secure the carrier to the at least one passenger seat; and a stabilizing support attached to the base proximate the front edge and extending in a direction substantially opposite the first and second side walls; wherein at least one of the first and second side walls is comprised of a first section and a second section, wherein only one of the first section and the second section is connected by a hinge member to the base to create a hinged section which allows pivoting between an open position and a closed position and provides an access to and from an interior of the pet carrier; and a shelf member attached to an upper edge of the hinged section wherein the shelf member creates: a horizontal support surface when the hinged section is in a closed position; and a step to allow a pet to access and exit the interior of the carrier when the hinged section is in an open position.

11. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 10, further comprising a locking mechanism to retain the

hinged section in a closed position.
12. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 10, further comprising a shelf member attached to at least one of the first side wall and the second side wall.
13. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 12, further comprising a recess in at least one shelf member attached to at least one of the first side wall and the second side wall.
14. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 10, wherein the stabilizing support is adjustable.
15. The pet carrier as set forth in claim 10, further comprising a kennel top configured to adjoin with the first and second side walls.