

## Pet Travel Scheme Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What are the new rules?

There are a number of differences between the pre 1 January 2012 UK pet movement controls and the rules from 1 January 2012 and 29 December 2014. The changes from 29 December 2014 have been outlined in the [EU Pet Travel Scheme: How to Complete Pet Passports](#) (ET159).

- under the current rules pet dogs and cats from other EU Member States and listed Third Countries do not need a blood test and can enter the UK 21 days after their rabies vaccination (rather than having to wait six months after their blood test)
- under the current rules pets from unlisted Third Countries are allowed to enter the UK through approved routes (or under an MOU for assistance dogs) without quarantine as long as they meet the EU entry requirements (microchip, rabies vaccination, blood sample at least 30 days after vaccination) and then wait a further three months after the blood sample was taken before being able to enter the UK
- under the current rules there is no requirement for pets to be treated for ticks before their arrival in the UK. A tapeworm treatment is still required for dogs coming from a non free country. It is still recommended that all dogs and cats are treated for tapeworm and ticks as part of a normal health programme and particularly on return to the UK
- further detailed information on the changes can be found on the [GOV.UK](#) website.

Entry rules for pets entering UK from the EU and listed Third Countries		
What has to be done	Pre 1 January 2012	From 1 January 2012
Microchip	Yes	Yes
Rabies vaccination	Yes	Yes
Documentation (pet passport or Third Country certificate)	Yes	Yes
Blood test (dogs and cats)	Yes	No
Pre-entry waiting period	Yes	Yes
Length of waiting period before entry to the UK	6 months	21 days
Tick treatment	Yes	No
Tapeworm treatment for dogs*	Yes	Required for dogs only

Entry rules for pets from unlisted Third Countries		
What has to be done	Pre 1 January 2012	From 1 January 2012 and 29 December 2014
Microchip	All pets from unlisted Third Countries were licensed into quarantine for six months and vaccinated against rabies on arrival	Yes
Rabies vaccination		Yes
Blood Test		Yes. Blood sample taken at least 30 days after vaccination
Documentation (Third Country certificate or passport for re-entry)		Yes
Pre-entry waiting period		Yes
Length of waiting period before entry to the UK		Three months after successful blood sample date
Tick treatment		No
Tapeworm treatment*		Required for dogs only

\*Not required for dogs from The Republic of Ireland, Finland, Malta and Norway.

The Republic of Ireland, Finland, Malta and Norway are considered to have an effective surveillance programme and have been recognised by the EU as free from Echinococcus multilocularis. Dogs traveling to these countries and returning within the one to five day window do not need to be treated for tapeworm.

## **2. What does 'listed' and 'unlisted' countries mean?**

For the purposes of the pet movements system in the EU, countries are divided into three different categories (named in the EU pet movement regulation) with varying movement controls: the full list is available on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

Member States or equivalents: EU Member States, but also European Economic Area (EEA) countries e.g. Switzerland, Norway.

Listed Third Countries: countries which the EU consider do not present a higher risk of disease incursion compared with movements within the EU (e.g. Australia, New Zealand) or where there is convincing evidence that they have effective systems in place to report, control and manage rabies (e.g. USA).

Unlisted third countries: countries which have not been accepted for listed status, because of less robust veterinary or administrative systems, higher rabies incidence, or because they have never applied (e.g. India, China, Sri Lanka).

## **3. What about rules/checks other animals - Rabbits, Reptiles, Insects, Pet Birds, Fish etc.?**

The new rules will only affect the import of pet dogs, cats and ferrets. Rules relating to other species will remain as they are now. Further details are available on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

## **4. Why is the blood test no longer required?**

The blood test will remain a requirement for pets arriving from unlisted countries. However, for movements from the EU and listed third countries, where the waiting period is only 21 days, the blood test would not mitigate the risk any further and therefore is not required.

## **5. Why have the old rules changed?**

The revised rules deliver substantial benefits to pet owners, making it easier and cheaper for the people who travel from the UK and return with their pets (on average 100,000) each year, and especially for those travelling with their pets for the first time. These changes will also provide UK citizens the same level of free movement with their pet animals which other EU citizens are allowed.

These changes are also scientifically justified. The level of risk to the public has substantially reduced in recent years as the incidence of rabies in domestic and wild animal populations in the EU and other countries has decreased, and the treatments for pets and humans are far more effective.

The EU pet movement system has been highly successful, demonstrated by the fact that, with many hundreds of thousands of pet movements across and into the EU, there has not been a single case of rabies associated with the legal movement of pets under the scheme since the system was introduced in 2004.

## **6. Will pets still need to be checked before they enter the UK to make sure they meet the entry rules?**

Yes. Pets entering the UK are still checked to make sure they meet the requirements of the Scheme regardless of which country they are coming from.

As the rules for pets coming from the EU and listed third countries are simpler, the checks that need to be carried out on those pets are more straightforward.

## **7. What happens to pets that fail?**

If pets are not found to have met the rules when they arrive in the UK, they will be licensed into quarantine, re-exported or destroyed. It is most likely that pet owners will choose for their animals to enter quarantine.

## **8. What are the most common causes of failure?**

Tapeworm treatment issues account for most of the failures, in particular pet owners not arranging the treatment within the defined timeframe. The new rules make it easier for pet owners to comply with the requirements.

## **9. Are there any age restrictions for pets being brought into the UK?**

Pets must be at least 15 weeks old. They must have been vaccinated on or after 12 weeks of age and there is a 21 day wait before they can move between Member States. Further details are available on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

## **10. Since the introduction of the pet travel scheme a number of diseases not previously found in the UK have found their way in.**

Generally these are in very small numbers and are diseases which are not considered to have a high impact on public or animal health. This is probably because the disease can be easily treated (for example several parasitic infections) or there is no vector in the UK so transmission to other animals or humans is unlikely (for example Leishmania).

The Government believes this strikes the right balance between an acceptable level of risk and allowing UK citizens the freedom of movement with their pets. Pet owners are advised to consult their veterinary surgeon before travel for advice on protecting their pet whilst abroad:

- dog heartworm (*Dirofilaria immitis*) is transmitted by mosquitoes. If pets are brought back into the UK with this disease, there is no risk in transmitting it to other pets as the mosquito vector is not present in this country
- dog lungworm (*Angiostrongylus vasorum*) is present in Europe and transmitted by eating slugs and snails.

Canine Leishmaniasis is transmitted by sandflies which are not present in the UK. There is no risk of transmitting the disease to other pets via sandflies, however the disease could be transmitted to other dogs or owners by blood contamination. Therefore if a pet is showing any unusual signs of disease it is important that veterinary advice is sought and that travel history is questioned.

## **11. Why retain tapeworm controls?**

Retaining tapeworm controls in the UK is proportionate and scientifically justified on the basis of the disease risk, and the likelihood and impact of the disease if it were to become established in the UK.

## **12. Why are there controls for tapeworm and not ticks?**

Human infection by the *Echinococcus multilocularis* tapeworm results in a serious chronic disease, alveolar echinococcosis, with symptoms similar to those of liver cancer. This disease is increasing across the EU and the European Commission has accepted that we have a strong scientific and legal case to maintain freedom from this tapeworm.

The current tick controls are targeted mainly at maintaining freedom from the dog tick *Rhipicephalus sanguineus*.

The risk assessment indicated that, though there remains a risk of introduction of this tick, there is a negligible risk of it being able to establish in the wider environment under current climate conditions. The risks from other tick species introducing infections such as Mediterranean Spotted Fever into the UK are difficult to quantify. Although ticks which are capable of transmitting the disease may enter the UK via pet movements, there are other routes by which the ticks can enter (for example on people or vehicles).

There is no strong scientific evidence to support the argument that such controls would be fully effective, justified and proportionate in mitigating the risk of disease incursion.

Pet owners should of course continue to routinely treat their pets for ticks to help reduce a range of tick borne diseases as part of their routine health management, especially if travelling abroad with their animals. Veterinarians are advised to discuss with their clients the appropriate course of action.

## **13. Should my staff be vaccinated?**

Guidance on pre-exposure (prophylactic) immunisation is available on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

## **14. Should veterinarians advise for or against Rabies vaccination for Dog/Cats following harmonisation?**

The UK does not have a policy of compulsory vaccination. Each individual case should be considered and advice given to the owner accordingly based upon where the animal is travelling to, if it is coming back to the UK, how often it travels and clinical history. The veterinarian presented with the animal needs to assess the case and advise accordingly. The risk of animals resident in the UK contracting rabies remains very low (almost negligible), but can increase when travelling abroad. A dog may interact with other animals/wildlife when abroad, while an indoors cat will not. In summary, a proper assessment should be done so the vet can advise the pet owner if a rabies vaccination programme is adequate or not for the particular animal/circumstance.

## **15. What are the clinical signs of rabies in pets?**

Information on the clinical signs of rabies infection is available from:

- [GOV.UK](#) website
- [The World Organisation for Animal Health \(OIE\)](#) website
- [The World Organisation for Animal Health \(OIE\)](#) Rabies Portal
- [The Rabies Bulletin Europe](#) website.

#### **16. If I suspect that an animal in my care has rabies, what should I do?**

When rabies is suspected it should be reported immediately to the duty vet at your nearest Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) office. Advice will be given about what steps to take next. The suspected animal should be kept isolated and restrained as well as any other animals that may be in the practice and which have had contact with the suspect case. A Veterinary Officer (VO) will normally come to the practice immediately and will manage the investigation.

#### **17. What advice can I give to reduce the risk of pets catching rabies when abroad?**

The British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation has produced useful advice for travellers about the risks and prevention of some common diseases when travelling with pets which is available on their website. <http://www.bva-awf.org.uk/pet-care-advice/pet-travel>

#### **18. Are tattoos an acceptable form of identification?**

Tattoos can be accepted as a valid form of identification, in lieu of a microchip, provided that the tattoo was applied to the pet before 3 July 2011 (this will be recorded in the passport or third country certificate). The tattoo must be clearly readable and matched to the number in the passport/third country certificate.

#### **19. Will a pet with an EU passport be allowed to enter the EU from an unlisted Third Country without a three month wait?**

Provided the pet has a valid passport and has been successfully blood tested in the EU and a serology entry made in the passport prior to leaving the EU, it can travel to and from an unlisted Third Country without the need for a three month wait after the date of the blood sample.

#### **20. Will owners bringing a pet to the EU from a Third Country be able to apply for an EU pet passport?**

Pets from Third Countries will need to travel to the EU under a Third Country certificate. Once in the EU, owners will have the option of applying for an EU pet passport.

#### **21. What happens if the microchip cannot be read?**

In the event you are unable to scan and read the original microchip, the pet must be re-chipped. If the pet has been previously prepared for travel, then it must be re-prepared in accordance with pet travel rules. Full guidance including advice on intermittent microchip problems, is available on the [GOV.UK](#) website.

#### **22. Is there a limit to the number of animals that can travel under the care of one person?**

One individual can travel with a maximum of five pets (dogs, cats and ferrets only). Ten pets travelling with two people (at least one of whom must be an adult, the second can be any age) is acceptable. The owner named in the passport should be travelling with the pet. Alternatively an authorised person can accompany the pets. They should have a document from the owner named in the passport authorising them to accompany up to five owned pets

If a person is planning to travel with more than five pets to another EU Member State, OV's must contact the Centre for International Trade - Carlisle to obtain the correct trade health certificate. The certificate is valid for ten days.

#### **23. Can a pet travelling to an unlisted Third Country return to the UK if the blood sample was taken less than 30 days after vaccination?**

Pets travelling to unlisted Third Countries that complied with the pre 1 January 2012 rules for re-entry into the UK may no longer do so if the blood sample was taken less than 30 days after vaccination. OV's should make sure they check this if people intend to travel to an unlisted country and come back to the UK afterwards.

APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.