

# Taking your pet abroad





## Taking your pet abroad

The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) has been a notable success, allowing some 200,000 British dogs and cats to travel abroad since the scheme began.

However, although the scheme requires vaccination against rabies, it does mean that pets may now face other new diseases against which they have little defence.

This booklet describes how PETS works and how to protect your animals from some of the health problems they could face when travelling.



# The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS)

## **What is PETS?**

Since 2000, the Pet Travel Scheme has allowed cats and dogs to enter the UK from certain countries without having to be placed in quarantine. This means that you can now take pets on holiday with you, subject to the conditions of the scheme.

## **What animals can travel?**

Currently only dogs, cats and ferrets are covered by PETS. This leaflet describes the regulations relating to dogs and cats only.

## **Which countries currently participate in PETS?**

Animals resident in the UK can now travel to most European countries and to many more distant destinations, and return to the UK under the Pet Travel Scheme.

For a complete and up-to-date list of participating countries, please call the DEFRA helpline or visit their website.

## **What travel routes and companies can I use?**

Your pet must enter the UK from a listed country travelling with an approved transport company on an authorised route. Routes and travel companies are regularly updated and you are advised to check all proposed travel arrangements with the travel company before booking your return trip to the UK, as they may have their own additional conditions of travel.

**PLEASE NOTE:** You may NOT bring a pet into the UK under the Pet Travel Scheme from a private boat or plane.

# The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS)

## What are the conditions of the scheme?

To qualify for the scheme, your pet must meet certain conditions. These are listed below:

1. The pet must have a **permanent microchip implanted before vaccination**. The chip must meet ISO specifications so that it can be read by any standard microchip reader.
2. The pet must be **vaccinated against rabies** (but not before it is three months old), using an approved vaccine. Boosters must then be given at the manufacturer's recommended intervals.
3. A **blood sample** must be taken after the pet is vaccinated. This is tested at an approved laboratory to check immunity to rabies. To have the highest chance of passing the test, it is recommended to have this sample taken three weeks after vaccination.
4. If the test is successful, the pet can be brought back into the UK **6 months after the blood sample was taken**.
5. The pet must have a **PETS passport** signed by an official veterinary surgeon, confirming that the above conditions have been met. Don't forget that some countries **may need additional certification** or other requirements before admitting your pet - so it is vital to check with a DEFRA Animal Health Office before you travel.
6. The pet must be treated for **ticks and tapeworms 24-48 hours prior to embarkation on the return journey to the UK**, and an official certificate must be obtained from a veterinary surgeon to confirm this.
7. You will need to **sign a declaration** stating that your pet has not been outside any of the qualifying countries in the six months before re-entering the UK.

## **What happens if my pet fails the blood test?**

A very small proportion of pets do fail the blood test - it's a quirk of biology. If this should occur, the pet will need to be revaccinated and re-tested. The six month rule still applies (see point 4, above), from the date the successful blood sample is taken.

## **What checks are carried out when I bring my pet back into the UK?**

Before entering or re-entering the UK, the transport company will check the pet's microchip and passport (for vaccination, blood test, parasite treatment and the owner declaration). DEFRA also spot-checks a number of animals.

## **What happens if the check reveals that my pet does not meet the requirements?**

Any pet that does not meet the requirements of the scheme will be returned to the country of origin or placed in quarantine. It is therefore recommended that, if you are taking your pet on holiday, the requirements are checked before you leave the UK. Then only the tick and tapeworm treatment and certification need to be obtained before you return.

## **Will my pet need to be blood tested each time it re-enters the UK?**

No. If the pet is given boosters according to the vaccine manufacturer's recommendations, then no re-testing is required. However, if the vaccine is overdue, even by a day, your pet will need to be sampled again.

## **How can I prepare my pet for the scheme?**

If you wish to travel with your pet using the scheme, it is wise to discuss your plans with your veterinary surgeon as early as possible, but at least 8 months before you travel. All travellers should contact the PETS helpline for advice and to obtain a fact sheet. Remember that not all holiday destinations welcome pets and not all holidays are suitable for pets. So do your research well before you make any plans.



# PETS Checklist

The Pet Travel Scheme requires a large number of conditions to be met, many of them months before you actually travel. The following timetable and checklist should help you ensure that everything gets done in time!

## Right now

- Visit the DEFRA website ([www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/index.htm)) for the very latest information on PETS, or call their hotline on 0870 241 1710. Check the following:
  - are the countries you plan to visit included in the scheme?
  - are all transit countries included in the scheme?
  - do those countries have any additional requirements?
  - check the authorised travel routes and carriers

## Start at least 8 months before you travel

- Have your pet microchipped by your vet
- Have your pet vaccinated against rabies
- Following vaccination, your vet must blood test your pet to confirm it is now immune to rabies. It is strongly advised that the blood test takes place as close to three weeks after vaccination as possible. The waiting time for the results can be a few weeks.
- If the test is successful, a PETS passport will then be issued by your vet. Six months after the date of the successful blood test, your pet will be allowed to return to the UK - and not before.
- At this stage, request any additional certification that may be required by the countries you plan to visit. If they demand an Export Health certificate, you should now contact your local Animal Health Office in the UK (listed on the DEFRA website). They will send the certificate to your vet, 10 working days before the date you intend to leave the UK. You must check whether your animal can meet the export health conditions that apply.

# PETS Checklist

## **A month before you travel**

- If you plan to travel to an area where sandflies are common (the Mediterranean coast, for example), ask your vet for a suitable treatment such as an insecticidal collar (see leishmaniasis, below).

## **The week before you travel**

- Around this time, it's wise to find a vet at the port from which you'll be returning to the UK, to provide the necessary parasite treatment.
- If you require an Export Health Certificate, you must visit your vet to obtain it (generally 24 hours before you travel). If your pet is sufficiently healthy and your pet complies with the applicable conditions, the vet will sign the certificate and hand it to you. We also recommend that your vet checks the current position of the microchip. This can sometimes move around under the skin and may be difficult for the port authorities to locate.
- Gather together all your important documentation, including PETS passport, Export Health Certificate and vaccination certificates.

## **24-48 hours before you embark for your return to the UK**

- The tick and tapeworm treatment can be administered (and the official certificate issued) in any of the PETS qualifying countries. This treatment should be carried out 24-48 hours prior to embarkation. An official certificate will be required.
- On entry\* to the UK, you'll be required to show your PETS passport, a declaration of residency (available from DEFRA or provided at the point of entry check) and the certificate of parasite treatment.

\* Unless travelling by air, in which case these checks will be carried out before embarkation

# Countdown to travel

## What you should do now

- Research your trip
- Visit the DEFRA website: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

## 8 months before you travel

- Have your pet microchipped by your vet
- Have your pet vaccinated against rabies

## 3 weeks after vaccination

- Blood test

## A month before you travel

- Obtain insecticidal collar if required

## The week before you travel

- Gather together all your important documentation
- Locate vet at return port

## 24-48 hours before your return to the UK

- Visit vet at return port to administer any tick and tapeworm treatment required



# Tick and insect-borne diseases

With British dogs and cats now travelling freely abroad, a large number have been exposed to diseases that they would never have encountered before.

Sadly, none of these diseases is prevented by the mandatory tick and tapeworm treatment that is part of the PETS scheme.

Owners should be aware of the following diseases and the means to prevent them. Your vet will be able to give additional advice and additional literature is available.

## **Leishmaniasis**

Leishmaniasis is an infectious disease of dogs transmitted by sandflies, found along Mediterranean coasts, South America, the middle east, and the tropics. Common symptoms include dermatitis, hair and weight loss, and diseased eyes, liver and kidneys. Can be fatal if untreated, and incurable even if treatment is given. Symptoms can take years to develop after infection.

**Prevention: if you are taking your dog to one of the high risk regions, you can prevent 95% of sandfly bites throughout the whole season using treatments available from your vet, such as a special insecticidal collar. Sandflies only come out at night, so even with the collar it is advisable to keep dogs inside from sunset to dawn between May and October.**

## **Babesiosis**

Found throughout Europe and in adjacent countries, babesiosis is primarily a disease of dogs and is transmitted by ticks. Affected animals develop fever, weakness, anaemia and lethargy. Sudden death can occur.

**Prevention: tick infestations can be prevented by using treatments such as the insecticidal collar mentioned above, which also prevents sandfly bites.**

# Parasites and tick-borne diseases

## Ehrlichiosis

Ehrlichiosis is also transmitted by ticks and is widespread in large parts of North and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Affected animals develop fever, anorexia, dyspnoea, oedema (swelling), vomiting, nose bleeds and neurological signs. Most dogs will not survive. German Shepherds are particularly sensitive to the infection.

**Prevention: tick infestations can be prevented by using treatments such as the insecticidal collar mentioned above, which also prevents sandfly bites.**

## Hepatozoonosis

Hepatozoonosis is transmitted by ticks and can be found Southern Europe, Africa, Asia and South America. Affected animals develop fever, lethargy, weight loss, anaemia and kidney and lung disease.

**Prevention: tick infestations can be prevented by using treatments such as the insecticidal collar mentioned above, which also prevents sandfly bites.**

## Heartworm

Heartworm disease is transmitted by mosquitos and can be found in certain parts along the Mediterranean coast. After infection, the larval worms grow to adult worms that live in the lungs and the heart. This process takes about six months. It may take years before affected animals develop signs, which include breathing difficulties and heart failure.

**Prevention: Heartworm disease can be prevented by either using products that have a repellent effect on the mosquitos that transmit the disease, or by using products that are active against the heartworm larvae.**





## More information

For further information about travelling diseases please don't hesitate to contact your veterinary surgeon or visit our website.



This leaflet is produced by Intervet UK manufacturer of the Scalibor® collar and Nobivac® Rabies.

Intervet UK Limited,  
Walton Manor, Walton,  
Milton Keynes MK7 7AJ

