DEFRA PETS - The Pet Travel Scheme

The Pet Travel Scheme is a system designed to keep the UK free from rabies and a certain tapeworm whilst still allowing:

- Pet dogs, cats and ferrets from certain countries and territories to enter the UK without quarantine as long as they meet the rules.
- UK Pet owners to take their dogs, cats and ferrets to certain other countries and territories, and return with them to the UK without the need for quarantine.

What do you need to do as a pet owner?

The rules for pet travel changed and simplified on 1st January 2012. Here is an overview of the steps required of pet owners.

To return to the UK from the EU and listed non-EU countries:

- **Microchip** - all pets must be permanently identifiable by microchip
- **Rabies Vaccination** - a single vaccination should suffice for most pets
- **Pet Passport** - official documentation for travelling, issued by your vet
- **21-day wait from vaccination before re-entering the UK**
- **A tapeworm treatment between 24 and 120 hours before entering the UK** - for dogs only. This must be administered by a vet between 1 and 5 days before you re-enter the UK, with a corresponding entry in the passport.
- **Arrange travel** - with an approved transport company on an authorised route

To return to the UK from unlisted non-EU countries:

- There is an additional requirement for a rabies blood test at least 30 days after the vaccination. The blood test is to show an adequate response to the vaccine.
- You must then **wait 3 months** from the date of the blood test (with a satisfactory result) before re-entering the UK.

You are strongly advised also to check the entry requirements for the country to which you are travelling with their border and customs agency.

Please visit the official DEFRA website for more information on the countries listed and to ensure that you make all the necessary arrangements for a smooth trip.  
www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/pets/travel

Pets that do not meet the entry requirements will be licensed into quarantine for up to 6 months or until they comply with the regulations. Ensure the rabies booster appointment is arranged for before it expires to keep your passport up-to-date.
IT IS SOLEY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PET OWNER TO ENSURE THAT THEY HAVE ARRANGED ALL THE NECESSARY STEPS FOR THEIR PET AND TO ENSURE THAT THEIR JOURNEY RUNS AS EXPECTED

What else should you think about when taking your pet abroad?

There are many pet diseases abroad that we do not see in the UK, several of which are transmitted by biting insects and ticks. Pets from the UK will be highly susceptible to these diseases as they are not encountered in Britain. It is important to consider the risk of exposure to these diseases, the high temperatures that can be encountered in continental Europe and the stress of long distance travel on your pet.

We advise a health check and pre-travel consultation 3 weeks before you depart to discuss the diseases you may encounter, how you can best protect your pet and to start preventative health care so that it will be fully active in time for your arrival abroad. These measures also reduce the risk of bringing these diseases back home.

Here are some of the more common exotic pet diseases you may encounter abroad:

- **Babesiosis** is mainly seen in dogs, transferred by ticks from dog to dog. It is distributed widely in Europe, causing many symptoms including fever and bleeding. Antibiotics are used to treat early infections but chronic disease can be difficult to treat and cause serious health problems.

- **Hepatozoonosis** is mainly seen in dogs. It is found in ticks and transferred by the dog/cat grooming and eating the tick. Signs are often not seen until the pet has another illness. Treatment is difficult and medication not always available.

- **Leishmaniasis** is spread by sandflies and found in all tropical areas including around the Mediterranean. Sandflies actually live predominantly in wooded areas. Signs are primarily of skin disease and occur months to years later. Treatment is difficult and doesn’t always work. Untreated it is fatal a disease.

- **Heartworm** is mainly seen in dogs although cats are also at risk. Certain mosquitoes seen widely in Europe carry it and signs develop over several months. These include a cough, weight loss, reduced exercise and sudden death from bleeding. Treatment is very difficult and often has side effects.

- **Brucellosis** is a disease of dogs that causes miscarriage, still birth and sperm defects. It is found in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. Infection is from birth materials. Treatment is long antibiotic courses and can fail.

- **Rabies** is invariably fatal and we are free from the virus in the UK. A preventative vaccination is available and required by law for travelling pets.

- **Tapeworm** *Echinococcus multilocularis* is widespread in Europe and can easily infect dogs without signs, but in humans it is potentially fatal affecting the liver predominantly. The UK is free from this parasite at the moment. By law you must treat your dog before re-entering the UK to protect us from it.
Here is how you can help protect your pet and yourself:

- **Tick control and Babesia and Hepatozoonosis**
  - **Avoidance** - avoid areas ticks are commonly found; woods and near livestock.
  - **Prevention** - use collars or spot-ons started before and continued throughout your trip. Please talk to us about what products are effective.
  - **Check your pet** - at least once daily and remove any ticks you see because often these diseases are not transferred for at least 24 hours. We can explain how to safely remove ticks and provide you with an appropriate tool.

- **Sandflies and Leishmania**
  - **Avoidance** - if travelling to high risk areas leave your dog in the UK.
  - **Reduce exposure** - keep animals inside from one hour before dusk to one hour after dawn when sandflies are most active. Don’t let pets sleep outside.
  - **Repellents** - use on your pet to reduce risk. Start 3 weeks before and continue during your whole trip. Please talk to us about what products are effective.
  - **Vaccination** - a newly licensed vaccination is now available prior to travel. Please contact us for more information.

- **Mosquitoes and Heartworm**
  - **Avoidance** - avoid mosquito infected areas with your pet or leave them behind.
  - **Reduce exposure** - repellents reduce biting but have only moderate efficacy.
  - **Prevention** - preventative treatment is the effective and safe approach. Please talk to us about what products are effective.
  - **Treatment** - should commence at least 3 weeks before, continue during and for a complete month after your trip.

- **Tapeworm and *Echinococcus multilocularis***
  - **Treatment** - this is the easiest way to prevent this disease from affecting humans and coming in to the UK. By law dogs must have a tapeworm treatment, administered by a vet, 24-120 hours (1-5 days) before re-entering the UK. If you are staying abroad for a long time we recommend monthly worming. Please talk to us about what products are effective.
  - **Hygiene** - humans are at a small risk of infection from the eggs of the parasite from dog and fox faeces, their coats, the soil or contaminated foods. Practice good hand hygiene before eating and wash all fruits and vegetables etc.

In all cases, please consult your vet if you see any signs of these diseases in your pet, whether it be days, months or even years after travel. Many of these diseases can be diagnosed by a blood test and treatment is usually easier and more successful the earlier it is started.

For further information please visit:
www.bva-awf.org.uk/resources/leaflets/AWF_Pets_abroad.pdf
www.esccapuk.org.uk