

Passport Scheme

At the end of February 2001, the Government introduced a scheme to allow dogs and cats to enter Great Britain without spending a period of time in quarantine kennels, the so-called PETS scheme. Animals being brought in under this scheme have to satisfy various criteria however, in order to minimise the risk of introducing diseases such as rabies to the UK. This has changed a little in that the original certificate has been replaced by the EU Pet Passport.

In a nutshell, dogs and cats can have a passport issued if:

- They are implanted with an approved microchip BEFORE rabies vaccination.
- They are vaccinated against rabies with an approved vaccine.

However, in order to reenter the UK, the pet must have a blood sample taken 2-4 weeks after vaccination (depending on the brand of vaccine used), which is sent to an approved laboratory. If the blood test reveals a high enough level of anti-rabies antibodies, then the pet will be allowed to return to the UK 6 months after the blood sample was taken.

PLEASE NOTE THAT SOME ANIMALS FAIL TO PRODUCE HIGH ENOUGH ANTIBODY LEVELS TO 'PASS' THIS BLOOD TEST. Repeating the vaccination may produce a better antibody response, but there is no guarantee of this. We cannot be held responsible for pets that fail to respond adequately.

This passport allows them to be moved freely within the mainland EU and certain other countries; the successful blood test is required for reentry to the UK along with certain other requirements (see on) from these approved countries. The list changes from time to time, so it is worth checking with the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for the most recent status. The website www.defra.gov.uk contains up to date information and advice, and they also have a helpline (0870 241 1710).

The passport will have to be completed before travelling, this can be done at any time after the rabies vaccine is given, but does not become valid for reentry to the UK until 6 months after a successful blood test result, as mentioned above. Pets cannot normally travel abroad until at least 21 days after the vaccine was given, but after this they can be taken abroad (**subject to satisfying the rules for any countries you intend to visit**). All vets can microchip, vaccinate and take the blood sample, but only approved vets (so called Official Veterinarians, also known as LVIs) can complete the passport – if your own vet is not an LVI then DEFRA can give you a list of LVIs in the area. The passport is valid until the date the next rabies booster becomes due – this varies depending on the brand used. If the booster is given on or before the last day that the passport is valid, then no blood test is needed and a new entry can be made in the passport immediately.

PLEASE NOTE IF YOU MISS THE DATE OF THE BOOSTER VACCINATION, EVEN BY JUST 1 DAY, THEN YOUR PET WILL NEED A BLOOD TEST 2-4 WEEKS AFTER VACCINATION AGAIN AND, ASSUMING A PASS, WILL HAVE TO WAIT 6 MONTHS FROM THE BLOOD SAMPLING DATE BEFORE REENTRY TO THE UK IS PERMITTED.

On returning to the UK, your pet will require treatment against ticks and tapeworms, using an **APPROVED** product for each, administered by a veterinary surgeon who certifies that it has been done in the relevant sections in the passport. This **MUST be done 24 – 48 hours before check-in at the port to travel back to the UK**. Note that day trips are possible – the tick and tapeworm treatments will have to be administered before leaving the UK to fit in with the expected check-in time for the return journey.

THIS ADVICE WAS CORRECT AT THE TIME OF WRITING – WE STRONGLY ADVISE YOU TO CHECK THE CURRENT REGULATIONS WITH DEFRA.

It is important to realise that this procedure satisfies the entry requirements for the UK only – anyone taking their pet abroad will have to satisfy the entry requirements for any countries they are visiting. Most EEC countries accept the passport as satisfying the criteria. However, many other countries require a separate health certificate completed by an LVI 24 – 48 hours before travelling or more, and some have more stringent requirements. It is important to check well before travelling with DEFRA, as these health certificates are issued individually, and not kept by LVIs. The message is – Plan Ahead!

When abroad, certain regions, particularly bordering the Mediterranean, have some pretty unpleasant diseases such as Heartworm, Leishmaniasis and Babesiosis and you should ensure that you seek advice on prevention before travelling.