

## Taking Your Pet Abroad

**Please** think carefully before taking your pet abroad. Whereas we may find it exciting to visit a foreign country, it can be quite daunting for a dog to be thrown outside of their comfort zone. Think about the individual pet, its age, health status and behaviour. An elderly dog with heart disease may have a reduced ability to cope with stress and heat for example. If you do decide to take your pet abroad, it is ultimately up to you to research the specific requirements for travel to your chosen destination as they will vary dramatically depending upon location and how you intend to travel. Plan well to help make it as enjoyable and safe as it can be!

### DISEASE

It is important to realise that the legal requirements for your pet to travel are not designed to protect your pet from disease. Their only role is to prevent zoonotic diseases (a disease that can be transmitted from animal to human) entering a country where it does not already exist.

There are many diseases that we do not experience in the UK. We have chosen to look at some of the more common diseases that you can aim to prevent against for travel to Europe, namely, those that are spread by parasites! It is advisable to come in for a consultation with a vet to discuss their control prior to travelling.

#### Babesiosis

- Most commonly transmitted by ticks.
- Mainly affects dogs.
- Common in Central and Southern Europe.
- Causes severe, life-threatening anaemia.
- Potentially fatal.
- Prevention – Tick treatment (see below)

#### Ehrlichiosis

- Most commonly transmitted by infected ticks.
- Mainly affects dogs.
- The organism can invade the blood alongside the liver, lymph nodes, bone marrow and spleen causing a fever, anaemia, depression, loss of appetite, shortness of breath, joint pain and a clotting disorder causing spontaneous bleeding. It can even

progress to neurological symptoms and seizures.

- Treatment is more successful in the early stages of the disease.
- Potentially fatal depending on when treatment commences.
- Prevention – Tick treatment

### **Hepatozoonosis**

- Caused by a parasite that is transmitted by eating infected ticks (e.g. from grooming)
- Symptoms include lethargy, weight loss, fever, pain, lameness, loss of muscle and ocular discharge.
- Treatment involves medication that is not readily available in the UK and prognosis depends on the species causing the infection. Some dogs will remain carriers of the disease even after treatment.
- Prevention – Tick treatment

### **Leishmaniasis**

- Transmitted by infected Sandflies (active from May to October; feed mainly at dusk and dawn).
- Common in the Mediterranean.
- The symptoms are very variable but can include skin lesions such as hair loss, ulcerations and inflamed areas and organ dysfunction to include kidney failure, eye disease, enlarged lymph nodes, bleeding and weight loss....
- Can be fatal.
- Symptoms can appear several months to years after travel.
- Prevention includes avoiding Sandflies (by keeping your pet inside from an hour before dusk until an hour after sunrise), environmental insect repellents and the use of a specific collar from your vet, called Scalibor. A vaccine for Leishmania has recently become available in the UK – it does not prevent infection but reduces the symptoms if the disease is contracted.

It is recommended you avoid ticks by:

- Avoiding areas heavily populated by ticks, e.g. wooded areas and livestock
- Using a quick speed of kill and or tick-repelling preventative medication during your stay (several are available including the use of Bravecto tablets every 12 weeks as it has a

quick speed of kill – but please feel free to discuss this with the vet prior to travel).

- Remember to start using the parasite preventatives more than 7 days BEFORE you travel.
- Check your pet each day and remove any ticks with a tick remover. It is important to understand that by the time a tick is easily visualised it has been there for some time with opportunity for disease spread – check thoroughly!
- If your pet is unwell take them to a vet and mention that they have been abroad.

### **Tapeworms**

- Tapeworms are common in the UK.
- In Europe, a certain tapeworm (*Echinococcus multilocularis*) may not cause illness in your pet, but can pose a serious health risk to people (potentially fatal), especially children.
- Foxes are the main hosts, but dogs can be easily infected.
- Eggs can be found on a dog's coat if contaminated with fox faeces.
- The Pet Travel Scheme states that your pet must be treated with the wormer Praziquantel between 24 and 120 hours (1-5 days) before re-entry into the UK.

### **Heartworm**

- Transmitted by mosquitoes.
- Mosquitoes inject the immature heartworm into the blood stream during feeding, they then travel to the heart and adjacent large blood vessels where they continue their life cycle to an adult and begin to reproduce.
- By the time symptoms are visible the disease is usually well advanced.
- Symptoms are severe and are as a result of the heart function and blood flow being reduced in turn reducing blood flow to all the organs. Symptoms include a cough, weakness, exercise intolerance and listlessness.
- Treatment is challenging and can be fatal.
- Preventative wormers should be started 1 month before exposure/travel. We recommend the use of Milbemax monthly alongside a Scalibor collar for the Mosquitoes!

### **Rabies**

- UK is currently free from rabies (since 1922).

- Rabies still occurs in parts of Europe.
- It is caused by a fatal virus affecting the nervous system.
- It is important to have your pet vaccinated at least 21 days prior to travelling abroad, although we strongly recommend leaving plenty of time.
- If you/your pet are bitten whilst abroad you must seek medical advice immediately.
- Your pet must be at least 12 weeks old before it can be vaccinated against Rabies. We must leave 2 weeks either side of their core vaccinations as they cannot be done on the same day.

### **LONG JOURNEYS**

- It is worthwhile taking into consideration whether your pet will cope with the stress of long distance travel. Make sure they have enough room and has access to water at all times. It is also necessary to stop for regular toilet breaks. Motion sickness is commonly encountered and we all know how horrid that can feel! Some signs of nausea are lip smacking, licking lips, salivating, loss of appetite and of course actually being sick. If you are concerned, there are medicines available to help with this so please come and talk to us. If you think your dog will be anxious there are also a number of anti-anxiety tips that we can help you with, including calming remedies/medicines to take with you. Please make an appointment if this is a concern of yours.

### **CHANGE IN CLIMATE**

- Think about the age, health status and breed of your dog to put yourself in their shoes before travelling with them. Imagine wearing a thick fur coat that you cannot take off and then walking around the streets of Rome in the direct sunlight. So perhaps we could prepare them by providing a cooling haircut!?

### **INSURANCE**

- It is advisable to check whether your pet insurance places any restrictions on travel abroad and whether you will be covered whilst abroad.
- Please note that it is beyond the scope of these notes to provide an all-inclusive check list to all destinations. Please do your own research specific to the travel destination and transport provider. Molecare Veterinary Services Ltd will not take any responsibility for discrepancies between travel requirements. For more information, please call the surgery on 01626 835002 to book an appointment.

### **Pet Travel Scheme (PETS):**

There are important changes to The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) that have been introduced in January 2021, following Brexit.

More information can be found at [www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad](http://www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad). Please note that it is the legal responsibility of the owner to make sure they comply with the travel requirements for the specific destination.

1. Microchip identification in your name, prior to the date of the Rabies vaccination.
2. Vaccination against rabies (at least 21 days before leaving then 3 yearly boosters).
3. An Animal Health Certificate (AHC) issued by an official veterinarian. This replaces the use of a Pet Passport, previously allowed under the PETS when Britain was part of the EU. An Animal Health Certificate (AHC) is valid for entry to the EU or Northern Ireland for up to 10 days from its date of issue, and for up to 4 months for onward travel within the EU and/or for re-entry to GB. i.e. an appointment must be made **NO MORE THAN 10 DAYS** prior to the date of travel.
4. Dogs must be treated for tapeworm 1-5 days (24-120 hours) prior to re-entry into the UK.

Note – You do not need an animal health certificate if you have a pet passport issued in an EU country or Northern Ireland.  
Your pet will need a new animal health certificate for each trip to an EU country or Northern Ireland from Great Britain.

### **For travel to a non-EU country – this requires an EXPORT Health Certificate (EHC)**

An EHC checks that your pet meets the health requirements of the country you're travelling to.

You must nominate an official vet who will be sent the EHC. They'll check your pet has met the correct health and identification requirements before you travel.  
Check the rules of the country you're travelling to for any additional restrictions or requirements before you travel.