

## Love your pet... love your vet

### Focus on rabies and the Pet Travel Scheme

Rabies can affect all mammals, including humans, and the disease is zoonotic, which means that it can spread from animals to people, commonly by a dog, bat or monkey bite.

The disease is mainly prevalent in Asia, America and Africa, but some European countries are also affected. Indeed, rabies is so widespread that the World Trade Organization (WHO) estimates that 55,000 people die each year from the disease, mostly in rural areas of Africa and Asia, and approximately 10 million people receive treatment each year after being exposed to animals thought to have rabies.

Rabies is a particularly nasty disease and is rightly feared across the globe. Symptoms include loss of appetite, fever, paralysis, aggression, hydrophobia and ultimately death.

Classical rabies was eradicated from the UK in 1922. Thanks to quarantine regimes, the country has remained free from rabies ever since. More recently, quarantine has been replaced by the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) which requires pets travelling abroad to be vaccinated against rabies.

Over 350,000 animals have entered the UK since the launch of PETS in 2000. In addition to vaccination against rabies, there are a number of other important things that you will need to consider if you wish to travel with your pet this year:

- Your pet must have a permanent microchip implanted before rabies vaccination. This chip must meet ISO specifications so that it can be read by any standard microchip reader
- Two vaccines against rabies are recommended to ensure your pet passes the blood test
- A blood sample must be taken after your pet is vaccinated against rabies. This is tested at an approved laboratory to check immunity against the disease. To have the highest chance of passing the test, it is recommended to have this sample taken three weeks after the second vaccination
- If the test is successful, your pet can be brought back into the UK six months **after** the blood sample was taken. This means the whole process will take up to seven and a half months from the date of the first vaccination

- Your pet must have a PETS passport signed by a 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's vital to check with a Defra Animal Health Officer before you travel. Alternatively visit the DEFRA website, a link to which may be found at [www.hillsidevets.co.uk](http://www.hillsidevets.co.uk)
- Your pet must be treated for ticks and tapeworms 24-48 hours prior to the return journey to the UK and an official certificate must be obtained from a veterinary surgeon to confirm this treatment
- 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

It is also advisable to think about any additional diseases that your dog may be exposed to while abroad, particularly if you're travelling to Mediterranean countries. These include leishmaniasis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, hepatozoonosis and heartworm.

**Keith, one of our vets offers a FREE of charge appointment to discuss all the necessary preventative measures (and double check your paperwork) a month or more before you travel. Please phone on 01202 698899 to book your appointment.**

Finally, remember to pack a pet bag! Take things like favourite toys, food, water and a grooming kit. Also, make sure that your pet is comfortable for the journey, with plenty of room to lie down and turn around.

For a pre-holiday health check for your pet or further information about travelling abroad with your pet under PETS, simply phone the practice to book an appointment.

*Disclaimer: The information and advice contained in this handout is for general information only. It is not intended to be a substitute for a veterinary examination and/or specific treatment or advice. You should always seek advice from your veterinary surgeon.*

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