

Pet Passport Information

Travelling with your pets within the EU, and certain listed non-EU countries has been made easier by the introduction of the Pet Passport. With a valid passport, your dog, cat or ferret can travel to and from countries included in the scheme, without having to go into quarantine on their return to the UK. The basic requirements are a **microchip**, **rabies vaccination** and the **issue of a Pet Passport**.

If you are thinking about travelling with your dog or cat please plan well in advance as the process can take some time. Initially your dog, cat or ferret is only allowed to travel back to the UK 21 days after rabies vaccination. In addition, your dog must be treated against tapeworm by a registered veterinary surgeon 1 to 5 days before returning to the UK.

The rabies vaccination has to be repeated within a strict period of time to keep the passport up to date.

For countries outside the scope of the Pet Passport scheme, the requirements may differ and the process may take longer.

Up-to-date information can be found on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ("DEFRA") website, and any of the vets at Yew Tree would be happy to discuss the requirements for your specific pet or travel arrangements.

Pets travelling abroad

It is important to realise that taking a pet abroad carries potential disease risks. Animals from the UK will have no natural immunity to several diseases which are common in Europe and elsewhere. The four main disease risks are **Leishmania**, **Babesiosis**, **Ehrlichiosis** and **Heartworm**, all of which are potentially life threatening. The diseases are all transmitted to pets when they are bitten by an infected insect.

Wherever you are travelling with your pet it is sensible to seek the advice of a local veterinary surgeon with regard to preventative health as he/she will best know the local disease risks.

Leishmaniasis is a protozoal disease found in dogs and rarely in cats. It is transmitted by sandflies, and infected dogs can pass it onto humans.

Ehrlichiosis is a bacterial infection transmitted by ticks. Symptoms vary widely and may include depression and fever. Chronic infections may progress to weight loss, arthritis and neurological disease including convulsions. If diagnosed in the early stages, it can be treated by antibiotics but longstanding cases do not respond and the prognosis is generally poor.

Babesiosis primarily affects dogs and is transmitted by ticks. The Babesia organism invades and multiplies in red blood cells causing anaemia. A tick biting an infected animal will become infected itself, and can go on to infect other animals. Treatment is by specific drugs plus supportive treatment such as blood transfusions in severely anaemic animals.

Heartworm (Dirofilaria), is transmitted by a mosquito. The adult worms live in the host's heart. Heartworm can spread between species, but is rare in humans

What can you do to prevent these diseases?

- ❖ Vaccinate your dog against Leishmania. Three injections are given at three week intervals, with yearly boosters. The vaccine has been shown to decrease fourfold the risk of Leishmania progressing to fatal disease; the vaccine reduces the risk of contracting Leishmaniosis but does not prevent it. Dogs that have lived in Leishmania endemic regions should be blood tested for Leishmania before vaccination.
- ❖ Use a Scalibor collar, in addition to your regular tick/flea prevention. The Scalibor collar is a sand-fly and mosquito repellent. The collar is plastic and contains a depot of deltamethrin (an insecticide) released slowly onto the dog's skin. The deltamethrin completely covers the body of the animal and retains its activity on the dog for many months. The protection rate against infection is thought to be between 80-90% so it greatly reduces the risk of Leishmania infection in individual dogs. The collar should be fitted at least one week before travel to give time for the deltamethrin to spread over the skin of the dog.
- ❖ Sand-flies' are most active at dawn and dusk, so try to avoid taking your dog out at these times.
- ❖ Check your dog daily for ticks and remove them as soon as possible.
- ❖ Give monthly milbemax worming tablets to prevent continental worms, in particular heartworm. Treatment must start within 1 month of exposure to mosquitoes and continue for at least one month after return to the UK - preferably for 3 consecutive months before resuming a normal 3 monthly dose.
- ❖ One final thing to consider before travelling is insurance for your pet. Check with your insurance company as they may require you to take out supplementary cover.