



## **Travelling abroad with your pet**

### **Precautions for dogs travelling abroad**

If you are taking your dog abroad there is a risk of him/her picking up diseases which are not normally seen in the United Kingdom. The risks from a short holiday are low but there are some precautions that you should take before and during your holiday to protect your dog. Remember that the PETS travel scheme is designed to prevent dogs from bringing rabies and tapeworms back to the UK. It is not designed to protect individual dogs whilst they are abroad.

Please read the following information regarding the common exotic diseases present in Europe. If you are travelling to areas affected by these diseases the Acorn House team will be happy to help you select the appropriate preventative treatments prior to your trip.

### **Leishmaniasis**

This is common around the Mediterranean including Spain, Portugal, Southern France, Italy and Greece. This disease causes skin problems, weight loss, lameness and kidney failure. Many of the scruffy looking dogs you see on holiday, especially those with hair loss around the eyes, will have leishmaniasis. Symptoms can often be improved with treatment, but the disease is difficult to cure completely. The disease may not develop for several years after the initial infection.

Leishmaniasis is spread by sandflies. Sandflies are mostly found in wooded areas and gardens, and are particularly active at night during the summer months. Prevention is by reducing the risk of bites by sandflies: do not allow your dog to sleep outdoors at night and use a preventative treatment to repel sandflies.

There is a choice of repellent products which may be purchased in the UK before you travel. One is a collar (scalibor) which contains deltamethrin and lasts for 6 months. The other is a spot-on treatment (Advantix) which lasts for 2 weeks. Plug-in insect repellents are also useful to keep the inside of the buildings insect-free for animals and people!

There is also a vaccination available for dogs travelling abroad which reduces the risk of them contracting Leishmaniasis (dogs that have been vaccinated are 4 times less likely to develop the disease). This vaccination may be given to dogs from 6 months of age. The initial vaccination course consists of three injections each given three weeks after the preceding injection. The onset of immunity is 4 weeks after completing the initial

course, so the vaccination course should be started at least 10 weeks before you wish to travel. Afterwards, a single booster should be given every year to maintain immunity.

### Heartworm

This is common in Australia, America, Spain, Southern France, and Italy. However, with global warming this disease is starting to occur further north, with occasional cases reported as far north as Brittany. The heartworms live in the heart and large blood vessels, causing heart failure and breathing difficulties. Symptoms are not usually seen for 6-12 months after infection.

Heartworm is spread by mosquitoes. Treatment is based around preventing mosquito bites, and also medication to prevent worms from developing if your dog is infected. Prevention of mosquito bites can be achieved by using the Scalibor collar or Advantix spot-on, as for preventing bites by sandflies.

The drugs which prevent heartworms developing are given monthly, starting before you leave the UK and continuing for a short period after your return. The choice is between a spot-on product (Stronghold) and a tablet (Milbemax). Because heartworm is common in the at-risk areas and is serious and difficult to treat once the worms are in the heart, we recommend that all animals travelling to risk areas are given one of these preventative drugs.

### Babesiosis

A few cases of this have now been reported in one isolated region in Essex. This disease is particularly common in France but also occurs in most other European countries. Babesiosis is a parasite of the red blood cells which causes severe anaemia. This disease can have a dramatic onset with fatal consequences 2-3 weeks after exposure to the ticks which spread Babesiosis. It is essential to get an immediate diagnosis and treatment, so if your dog suddenly becomes ill whilst abroad or soon after returning, seek veterinary attention immediately.

Babesiosis is spread by ticks. In most cases the Babesia parasite is not transmitted to the dog until the tick has been feeding for 24-48 hours. Treatment is based on avoiding ticks, preventing them from biting the dog, and removing them within 24 hours if they do bite the dog.

We recommend the following:

- Avoid rough ground and forests, especially where other animals graze.
- Use a tick repellent e.g. Advantix spot-on or a collar (Seresto or Scalibor)
- Use a product which kills ticks if they do attach e.g. Advantix, Seresto, Bravecto (a tablet which kills ticks and fleas for 12 weeks after administration) Frontline spot-on (kills ticks if used monthly kills but does not repel them).
- Do a thorough groom of your dog every day and check carefully for ticks.
- Use a tick hook to remove any ticks found as soon as possible (tick hooks are very easy to use and can be purchased at reception).

### Ehrlichiosis

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This disease is seen in all Mediterranean countries. It often causes disease in dogs at the same time as Babesiosis because it is also transmitted by ticks. Ehrlichiosis is a parasite which infects the white blood cells. Initially it causes a fever. Following this, some dogs recover completely. Other dogs remain infected and develop problems with their immune system and blood clotting system. Prevention is by preventing tick bites as for Babesiosis.

### **Precautions for cats travelling abroad**

Cats are also at risk from contracting the above diseases.

Unfortunately, the options for safely protecting cats are more limited. There is no safe tick or sandfly repellent treatment for cats and no vaccination against Leishmaniasis (fortunately Leishmaniasis is much less common in cats than in dogs).

Protecting your cat will involve:

- Returning cats to the house before dusk (when sandflies become more active)
- Avoiding access to areas with a high prevalence of ticks (rough ground, forests, grazing areas)
- Applying Broadline monthly for protection against heartworms as well as roundworms and tapeworms
- Broadline will also kill ticks once they have attached so that they drop off more quickly (within 48 hours)
- Check your cat daily for ticks and remove any using a tick removing hook

### **Information about pet passports**

Under the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) dogs, cats and ferrets can enter or re-enter the UK from certain countries without the need for quarantine provided they meet the rules of the scheme. These rules are different depending on which country or territory the pet is travelling from and we advise you check the Defra website for the most up to date information.

For a pet passport to be completed by your vet you will need the following:

- 1) Your pet must be microchipped so they can be properly identified.
- 2) Your pet must be vaccinated against rabies. Only one injection needs to be given
- 3) Your pet passport is not valid until 3 weeks AFTER the date of this injection
- 4) A LVI vet must sign and stamp your passport. Our reception team will book you in with a vet that has done further training in order to complete the passport.

Before the regulations changed we used to carry out a blood test to prove that there had been an adequate response to rabies vaccination. In some cases we found that two rabies vaccines were required to produce a sufficient antibody response. We are happy to discuss this with you at the passport appointment.

The rabies vaccine is valid for 3 years, however some countries still insist on yearly vaccination – we ask that you check the rules on the Defra website regarding this.

In dogs, when returning to the UK, a vet will need to administer a tapeworm treatment (against *Echinococcus multilocularis*) not less than 24 hours and not more than 120 hours (1-5 days) before you re-enter the UK, this is recorded in the passport and certified by the vet.

### **Export certificates**

Animals travelling to non-EU countries will need an export certificate. The different countries all have very different requirements and in some cases extra vaccinations may be needed. We recommend that you give us as much notice as possible so your vet has time to read through the documentation.

The certificate will need filling in 24-48 hours prior to departure but it can take hours for the vet involved to sort out all the paperwork, advance notice makes it much less stressful for everyone involved!

### **Further PETS Guidance**

Extensive guidance is available from:

- [GOV.UK](http://gov.uk)
- Pet Travel Scheme Helpline 0370 241 1710 (available Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm UK time (closed Bank Holidays))
- Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) Centre for International Trade - Carlisle (CITC) Quarantine Section (03000 200 301)
- Pet Travel Scheme Frequently Asked Questions (ET140).