

The UK Pet Travel Scheme

Advice to veterinary surgeons in USA and Canada

November 2002

1. Introduction

This fact sheet provides advice to vets in the USA and Canada on the veterinary requirements for preparing pet dogs and cats to travel to the UK under the UK Pet Travel Scheme (PETS). They are able to travel from 11 December 2002.

This fact sheet has been issued for the inclusion of the USA and Canada in PETS. Our fact sheets are regularly updated. Check our website for the latest information.

The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has a separate fact sheet for dog and cat owners in the USA and Canada who want to take their animal to the UK which also covers other requirements of PETS. Please recommend clients to obtain this from Defra (*see section 9 for contact details*).

2. The rules

PETS applies only to pet cats and dogs, including guide and hearing dogs. These animals can enter the UK without quarantine as long as they meet the rules.

To qualify, each animal must be, in this order:

- fitted with a microchip (*section 3*);
- vaccinated against rabies (but not before it is 3 months old) (*section 4*);
- blood tested at a recognised laboratory (*section 5*);
- issued with an official PETS certificate (*section 6*);
- treated against ticks and tapeworms and issued with an official certificate of treatment (*section 7*)

A dog or cat can be fitted with a microchip in any country. As animals from the USA or Canada can only enter the UK direct, the rabies vaccination, blood sampling (which is needed for the blood test), tick and tapeworm treatment and issue of official certificates must all be done in one qualifying country (i.e. USA or Canada).

However, if any of these procedures were done in Europe before an animal went to the USA or Canada, special rules may apply. The PETS Helpline can give

more advice (*section 9*). If any of these procedures were done in a non-European PETS country (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, Japan etc.) the animal will need to be re-prepared in the USA or Canada. Assuming that the animal is already microchipped, this process will begin with the rabies vaccination.

Dogs and cats may not enter the UK under PETS until 6 months have passed from the date that the blood sample was taken which led to a successful test result. Once the PETS certificate has been signed and that 6 month period has passed, the PETS certificate is valid and the animal may enter the UK.

2.1 What veterinarians can do

Any registered or licensed veterinary surgeon can microchip, vaccinate, arrange blood-testing and carry out the tick and tapeworm treatment and issue the official certificate of treatment. But only veterinary surgeons authorised by the US or Canadian Governments are able to issue the official PETS certificate.

PROCEDURES IN DETAIL

3. Microchip identification

3.1 Type of microchip

To identify an animal, it must be fitted with a microchip. In Europe, ISO (International Standards Organisation) Standard microchips meeting specifications 11784 or Annex A to ISO Standard 11785 are generally used. We recognise that a different type is often used in the USA and Canada. Please advise your client whether you have fitted an ISO microchip or one that does not conform to an ISO Standard.

If the microchip used does not correspond to one of these ISO Standards, it may not be readable by an ISO microchip reader when the animal is checked in Europe. This means that dog and cat owners would have to provide their own microchip reader to enable the microchip number to be read successfully, particularly if they intend to travel from the UK to Europe with their animal and then return to the UK under PETS.

3.2 Reading a microchip

We recommend that you obtain a suitable microchip reader before offering the PETS service to clients. This will enable their animal to be properly identified when each of the procedures in sections 4-7 is carried out. If the microchip cannot be read, these procedures should not be undertaken until it can be read. Please remember that some readers need to be moved slowly over the animal to locate the microchip.

3.3 Fitting a microchip

An animal must be microchipped *before* it is vaccinated against rabies. The microchip should be implanted according to the manufacturer's instructions.

You should check that the microchip number can be read before and after the microchip has been fitted. You should record the microchip number on the vaccination record (*section 4.3*). This should be done from the microchip reading, NOT on the basis of any accompanying documentation.

4. Vaccination

4.1 Type of vaccine

Animals must be vaccinated against rabies with an approved inactivated vaccine authorised for use in your country.

4.2 When to vaccinate

Animals must be at least three months old before they are vaccinated. An animal vaccinated before that age will not qualify for PETS.

Vaccination can take place any time *after* the animal has been fitted with a microchip. Before administering the rabies vaccine, you *must* check that the animal's microchip number can be read and that the number is the same as on the documentation.

If an animal has been vaccinated against rabies before it was identified by a microchip, it will have to be vaccinated again. This is to make sure that it is correctly identified when vaccinated.

4.3 Record of vaccination

When an animal is vaccinated, you should record the following details on its vaccination record card:

- its date of birth/age (if known)
- the microchip number (and date of insertion, if known)
- the date of vaccination
- the vaccine product name
- the batch number
- the date the booster vaccination is due (calculated by reference to the vaccine manufacturer's data sheet)
- sign, date and stamp

4.4 Revaccination (boosters)

After an animal has been successfully vaccinated against rabies, it should be given booster vaccinations. This must be done by the “Valid until” date on the PETS certificate (*section 6.2*) and should be recorded on the vaccination record. The revaccination interval for cats may be different to that for dogs. The animal’s microchip number should be checked, using a microchip reader, before each revaccination.

If the revaccination takes place after the “Valid until” date on the PETS certificate, the animal will have to be vaccinated and blood tested again. It would then have to wait six months from the date a successful blood sample was taken after revaccination before being able to enter the UK under PETS.

5. Blood testing

5.1 Blood sample

You will need to arrange for a sample of the animal’s blood to be taken and submitted for testing at a recognised laboratory (*section 5.2*). The animal’s microchip number should be read before the blood sample is taken. Do not assume that the number on the accompanying documentation is correct.

We recommend that a blood sample is taken about 30 days after the vaccine injection. Give your client a signed record of the date the blood sample was taken with the microchip number clearly stated.

5.2 Where the blood test is done

The blood test must be performed at a laboratory recognised by Defra. There are currently two laboratories recognised in the USA – see Annex A – but none yet in Canada. However the blood test may be carried out at any Defra recognised laboratory. Blood tests carried out before the recognition date of the laboratory are not acceptable. A list of all laboratories, with recognition dates, is on the PETS website (*section 9*).

Before sampling, contact a laboratory to obtain the correct sample submission form and ask for advice on the labelling and means of transmission of the sample. Do not leave this to your clients. Make sure that the microchip number is accurately and clearly recorded on the submission form. It would be as well to check with the laboratory when you can expect to receive the result. If you have not received the result soon after this date you may wish to check that the laboratory received the sample.

5.3 Blood test result

A successful blood test result must show that the rabies neutralising antibody titre was equal to or greater than 0.5 IU/ml. You should give your client a copy of the result with the animal's microchip number clearly stated.

5.4 Failed blood tests

If an animal fails the blood test, it will normally have to be revaccinated and blood tested again. The 6 month wait before entering the UK would run from the date that a subsequent successful blood sample was taken.

5.5 Further blood tests

No further blood tests are required after the first test which gives a successful result provided the animal is subsequently revaccinated by the "Valid until" date on the PETS certificate (*section 6.2*). See section 4.4 if the revaccination date has been missed.

6. The PETS certificate

6.1 Issuing a certificate

To take a dog or cat into the UK, pet owners will need an official PETS certificate which must be fully completed by a vet authorised by the government of the USA or Canada. In the USA these certificates are available from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and in Canada from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) (*section 9 gives more details*).

Before issuing a certificate the vet will need to examine the animal and check that it:

- can be identified by its microchip number and that this number agrees with the number on all the accompanying documentation
- has a current vaccination against rabies given after the microchip was implanted
- has had a blood test showing that the vaccine has given satisfactory protection against rabies
- shows no clinical signs of rabies

If the animal does not meet all of these requirements, a certificate must not be issued.

A PETS certificate may be issued at any time after the animal has received a successful blood test result, provided it is covered by a current rabies vaccination.

6.2 Validity of a PETS certificate

A PETS certificate will not become valid for entry to the UK until 6 months have passed from the date the blood sample was taken which gave a successful test result (the 'Valid from' date). If the certificate is issued after that 6 month period has passed, it will be valid for entry to the UK immediately. The certificate will remain valid up to the date the animal's booster vaccination is due (the 'Valid until' date). The 'Valid until' date is calculated by reference to the validity period of the vaccine as stated on the manufacturer's data sheet.

6.3 Renewing a certificate

A renewal certificate should be issued at the time of revaccination but only if it takes place by the "Valid until" date on the PETS certificate. Renewal certificates are valid from the date of issue and will expire when the next booster is due. See section 4.4 if the revaccination date has been missed.

7. Treatment against ticks and tapeworms

Before dogs and cats are allowed to enter the UK under PETS, they must be treated by a vet against a tapeworm (*Echinococcus multilocularis*) and ticks to prevent potentially serious zoonotic diseases coming into the UK.

The treatment must be carried out not less than 24 hours and not more than 48 hours before the animal is checked-in to travel to the UK, and must be given **every time** it enters the UK. The animal's microchip number must be checked using a suitable reader before treatment. Dogs and cats entering quarantine in the UK with a view to early release can have the treatment done in quarantine.

7.1 Treatment

The animal must be treated against the tapeworm using *praziquantel* at the dose specified, and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and against ticks using a veterinary product licensed for use against ticks which has marketing authorisation in the country in which it is given. In Hawaii, the tick treatment must contain *fipronil*. A collar impregnated with acaricide is not an acceptable form of treatment against ticks under PETS.

7.2 Official certification of treatment against ticks and tapeworms

After the animal has been treated, you will need to complete an official certificate to certify that you have administered the treatment. In the USA these certificates are available from the USDA and in Canada from the CFIA (*section 9 gives more details*). You must enter the animal's microchip number, the *date* and *time* of treatment, the product used and then sign, date and stamp the certificate. Then hand the certificate to the pet owner.

8. Health and welfare of dogs and cats travelling to the UK

Pet owners have been advised to consult their vet before taking their animal to the UK if they have any doubts about its fitness to travel. They are also recommended to consider its welfare needs when travelling. A welfare leaflet is available from Defra (*section 9 gives contacts*).

9. Further information

In the USA:

United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
4700 River Road
Unit 33
Riverdale, MD
20737

Telephone: (301) 734 8364
Fax: (301) 734 6402
Website: aphis.usda.gov/vs/ncie

Please contact your local Area Office in the first instance – on the web use: aphis.usda.gov/vs and click on “area offices”

In Canada:

Christine Quinlan
Client Relations Officer
Importation/Exportation
Animal Health and Production Division
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
59 Camelot Dr
Nepean
Ontario, K1A 0Y9

Telephone: (613) 225-2342 ext. 4629
Fax: (613) 228-6630
E-mail: cquinlan@inspection.gc.ca
Website: www.inspection.gc.ca/english/toce

In the UK:

- Website: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine (there is a special section for vets - on the Site map see “What vets need to do”)
- PETS Helpline: 011 44 870 241 1710 (Monday to Friday - 8.30am to 5pm UK time)

- E-mail: pets.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk (enclose your address and daytime telephone number)
- Fax: 011 44 20 7904 6834

Annex A

Laboratories in North America recognised by Defra for blood testing under PETS

Name and address	TEL/FAX	Recognition date
<p>FAVN Rabies Laboratory 1800 Denison Avenue Mosier Hall Kansas State University Manhattan Kansas 66506-5600 USA</p> <p>Request the FAVN test (not the RFFIT test)</p> <p>E-mail: rabies@vet.ksu.edu Website: www.vet.ksu.edu/rabies</p>	<p>Tel: 785 532 4483 Fax: 785 532 4522</p>	<p>30 January 2002</p>
<p>* Veterinary Command (VETCOM) Food Analysis and Diagnostic Laboratory 2472 Schofield Road Bldg 2632 Ft Sam Houston TX USA 79234-6232</p> <p>* NOTE: This laboratory accepts blood samples taken from dogs and cats belonging only to US government employees and military service members being assigned overseas on official orders</p>	<p>Tel: 210 295 4604 Fax: 210 270 2559</p>	<p>20 January 2002</p>