



BRIEFING PAPER

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Brexit and Pet Travel

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Contents

1. The PETS travel scheme	1
2. Leaving the EU	2
2.1 With a deal	2
2.2 With no deal	3
3. Further Information	3
3.1 British Veterinary Association advice	3

1. The PETS travel scheme

The [EU Pet Travel Scheme \(PETS\)](#) allows residents in EU Member States to travel freely with their cats, dogs and ferrets within the EU as long as they meet the requirements set out in the pet passport scheme. These include requiring pets to be [microchipped](#) and be up to date on [rabies vaccinations](#). Crucially there is no further requirement for blood tests to prove rabies immunity, which can delay travel for up to four months. Regulations set out that pets must:

- be microchipped before rabies vaccination;
- be vaccinated against rabies at least 21 days before travel, pets must be at least 12 weeks old before receiving the rabies vaccination on the scheme;
- have a valid EU pet passport;
- travel with an approved transport company on an authorised route;
- Dogs entering the UK, Ireland, Finland, Norway or Malta must be treated for tapeworms by a vet with a product containing praziquantel (or equivalent) no less than 24 hours and no more than 120 hours (between 1 and 5 days) before its arrival in the UK.¹

¹ British Veterinary Association, [Pet Travel](#) [website visited 23 July 2019]

Further information on the detailed requirements are available from the [Pet Travel Scheme helpline](#).

2. Leaving the EU

Following Brexit, the ability of both UK and EU resident pet owners to travel between the UK and the EU will be affected.

The UK leaving the EU means it will at some stage become a “third country” for the purposes of pet travel. The EU has a three-tier system for the movement of pet dogs, cats and ferrets from third countries to Member States: [Part 1 listed country](#), [Part 2 listed country and Unlisted](#). Being a listed country allows for several exemptions from the requirements for animals travelling from non-EU countries to EU Member States.

Box 1: EU three-tier system

Part 1 listed country: this requires owners to have a completed third-country pet passport, which must include proof of anti-rabies vaccination. For those travelling to Finland, Ireland or Malta, pet dogs will also have to show proof in their passports of treatment against *Echinococcus multilocularis* (a tapeworm species). Currently this is also a requirement for entry into the UK from the EU. There are 11 Part 1 listed countries, including countries such as Switzerland and Norway.

Part 2 listed country: this requires owners to have a valid certificate for a pet issued for *each entry* into the EU. This is valid for travel within the EU for four months only. The certificate must include proof of anti-rabies vaccination and the same treatment requirements for *Echinococcus multilocularis* as for Part 1 listed countries. Pets are only allowed to enter the EU through designated traveller ports of entry. There are 44 Part 2 listed countries, including countries such as Canada and Argentina.

Unlisted country: In addition to Part 2 listed country requirements the certificate must also show a valid anti-rabies titration test (to show the vaccine has been effective). This requires the vaccination for rabies to have been at least four months before the intended travel date:

The test must have been carried out in an EU-approved laboratory or in a laboratory approved by one of the EU-27 Member States on a sample taken at least 30 days after vaccination and not less than three months before movement.²

2.1 With a deal

If the UK leaves the EU with a deal based on the current [Withdrawal Agreement](#), there would be a transition period of up to two years during which existing rules as set out above would continue to apply. After that the conditions for travelling with pets would be those that agreed during negotiations for post-Brexit arrangements, based on the UK’s position as a third country.

Box 1 above sets out the requirements for the different categories. “Part 1 listing” sets the same requirement as the EU PETS passport scheme. However, the passport is different so pet owners would have to change their existing pet passport to travel to the EU.³ Travellers from “unlisted” countries require a valid anti-rabies titration test in addition to rabies vaccination. Further details can be found in the Government guidance on [Pet travel to Europe after Brexit](#).

² EU Commission, [Notice on travelling between the EU and the United Kingdom following withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU](#), 13 November 2018

³ HM Government, [Pet travel to Europe After Brexit](#), 10 April 2019

2.2 With no deal

In the event of no deal both the UK and the EU have published information for pet owners wishing to travel between these two areas.

The UK Government guidance [Pet travel to Europe after Brexit](#) states that “the UK is likely to be treated as an unlisted country under the EU Pet Travel Scheme if it leaves the EU without a deal”.⁴ If the UK does become an unlisted country it would mean that **UK residents travelling to the EU** with pets would have to comply with the unlisted country requirements set out in Box 2, including the rabies antibody test, which requires a visit to their vet at least four months before planned travel to the EU to be sure of compliance. They will also need to use designated ports of entry.

UK residents returning to the UK with pets from the EU will require either an EU or UK issued pet passport, or a valid EU entry certificate. The Government does not intend to change the existing health preparation requirements.

The EU Commission guidance document [Notice on travelling between the EU and the United Kingdom following withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU](#) sets out that if the UK is unlisted then the same conditions would also apply to **EU residents returning from the UK to the EU** after having travelled here with their pets. Pet owners will have to re-enter the EU through designated traveller points of entry and comply with unlisted country requirements, including a blood test to prove anti-rabies vaccination effectiveness.

The [UK Government guidance](#) provides the following advice on this:

You can also use it to return to the EU, as long as your pet has had a successful rabies antibody blood test. You must make sure the blood test is taken at least 30 days after the date of rabies vaccination.

If the blood sample is taken in the UK you must wait 3 months from the date the successful blood sample was taken before you travel back to the EU. You do not have to wait the 3 months before travelling if your pet has a successful blood test before leaving the EU.⁵

3. Further Information

The Government [Pet Travel Scheme Helpline](#) provides advice for those planning to travel with pets.⁶ Anyone with any concerns about how any changes due to Brexit may affect them should contact the helpline or ask their veterinary surgeon for advice.

3.1 British Veterinary Association advice

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) issued the following [advice](#) for pet owners, in advance of the original 31 March 2019 exit date:

In a no deal situation, pet owners would still be able to travel to Europe with their pet after Brexit, but they could need to take additional steps and start preparations at least four months ahead of their planned departure date.

Those wishing to travel to the EU after 29 March 2019 should discuss requirements with their vet as soon as possible.

Vaccination and testing ahead of travel

⁴ HM Government, [Pet travel to Europe After Brexit](#), 6 August 2019

⁵ HM Government, [Pet travel to Europe After Brexit](#), 6 August 2019

⁶ Pet Travel Scheme helpline, pettravel@apha.gov.uk, Telephone: 0370 241 1710

4 Brexit and Pet Travel

The requirements for travel would include making sure that pets are effectively vaccinated against rabies before they travel. This involves having an up-to-date rabies vaccination and a blood test to demonstrate sufficient levels of rabies antibody.

The blood test would need to be carried out a minimum of 30 days after any initial rabies vaccination and a minimum of three months before their travel date. This means that pet owners will need to talk to their vet about health requirements in good time to make sure they are able to travel with their pet.

The date that the animal can travel is taken from the date of blood sampling, not the date of reporting the results, so even if the report is delayed, the proposed date of travel would not be affected, provided the results are confirmed as clear.

Pet passports

Vets should continue to issue EU pet passports for pets travelling up until 29 March 2018. It is not yet clear whether the pet passports scheme will continue or take a new form after Brexit, so vets should issue the new documentation as appropriate for travel from 30 March.⁷

⁷ BVA, Brexit and the Veterinary Profession [website visited 24 June 2019]

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