

**Research Briefing**

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# Pet travel after Brexit

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## Summary

Changes to the requirements for pet travel between the UK and EU countries came into force on 1 January 2021 after the UK left the EU.

A Defra [press release](#) published on 16 December 2020, the Government announced that the UK would have part 2 listed status from 1 January 2021 which meant new rules would apply for pets travelling to Europe and Northern Ireland. The Government also stated that it would continue to press the European Commission to secure Part 1 listed status, which would allow for similar arrangements to the previous pet passport schemes.

The new scheme requires pet owners to obtain an Animal Health Certificate (AHC) for their pet from their vet every time the travel to the EU. The AHC

must be produced in the 10 days before travel and is valid for up to four months in the EU. The costs charged for an AHC vary but have been [estimated](#) at between £100-£150.

Further details of the new requirements and the different options available during the negotiation process are set out in this briefing paper.

# 1 The EU PETS travel scheme

The [EU Pet Travel Scheme \(PETS\)](#), which the UK was part of until 31 December 2020, 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](#). There is a further requirement for blood tests to prove rabies immunity. 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.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 EU three tier system for third countries

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

The UK leaving the EU meant it became a “third country”, or non-member state, 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](#), as set out below. Being a listed country allows for several exemptions from the requirements for animals travelling from non-EU countries to EU Member States.

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

## 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.<sup>2</sup>

## 2

## New UK travel rules

On 16 December 2020, the Government announced that the UK would have Part 2 listed status from 1 January 2021 and [outlined the new rules for pet travel to the EU and Northern Ireland](#). The Government has also stated its intention to continue to press the European Commission for Part 1 listed status for the UK.<sup>3</sup>

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

<sup>3</sup> Defra, [New rules for pet travel from 1 January 2021](#), 16 December 2020

## 2.1 Travel to the EU

Pet passports are no longer valid for travel to the EU. Instead, pet owners now need to visit a vet to get an animal health certificate (AHC), no more than 10 days before travel to the EU.

Pets and assistance dogs will also need to enter the EU through a [travellers' point of entry](#) (TPE), which includes all the major French ports such as Calais, Caen and Dunkirk.<sup>4</sup>

The maximum [number of pets](#) that can be taken into the EU is set at five, unless travelling for a competition, show or sporting event. Proof of this is required on entry.

## 2.2 Travel to Northern Ireland

[Under the Northern Ireland Protocol](#), the same requirements apply for entry into Northern Ireland as for entry into the EU, for both GB pets and assistance dogs.

The Government stated when announcing the agreement on pets that they were working with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to ensure the enforcement of the new requirements takes into account the need for time to adjust to the changes:

All of these requirements will also apply for movements of pets and assistance dogs from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. However, recognising that these changes will take time to adjust to, the UK Government is working with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland on an enforcement approach that takes this challenge into account. This approach will be implemented in a way which supports pet owners and assistance dog users while the Government pursues a permanent solution.<sup>5</sup>

[Physical checks](#), which are part of the new arrangements, were not intended to be implemented until July 2021. However, the UK and Northern Ireland Governments unilaterally [extended the deadline](#) as part of the ongoing discussion with the EU about the Northern Ireland Protocol, so these have not yet been implemented.

The UK Government website also provides advice as follows for [repeat visits to Northern Ireland](#), which includes the requirement for a new AHC for each trip:

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<sup>4</sup> Defra, [New rules for pet travel from 1 January 2021](#), 16 December 2020

<sup>5</sup> Defra, [New rules for pet travel from 1 January 2021](#), 16 December 2020

- Your pet will need a new [animal health certificate](#) for each trip to an EU country or Northern Ireland.
- Your pet will not need a repeat [rabies vaccination](#) so long as its rabies vaccinations are up to date.
- Your dog will need [tapeworm treatment](#) for each trip if you're travelling directly to Finland, Ireland, Malta, Northern Ireland or Norway.

Further [Government guidance on pet travel to the EU and Northern Ireland from 1 January 2021](#) is available online.

## 2.3 Entering the UK from the EU or Northern Ireland

There has been no change to requirements for animals entering GB from the EU and Northern Ireland. The Government will continue to recognise EU pet passports.

The latest Government advice on [bringing your pet to the UK](#) is available online. The Government [Pet Travel Scheme Helpline](#) provides advice for those planning to travel with pets. 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 Animal Health Certificates implementation

As referred to above, travel from GB to the EU or Northern Ireland now requires pets to be issued with an Animal Health Certificate (AHC). As set out by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) this must be done by an [Official Veterinarian \(OV\)](#). These are vets that have been approved for certain roles by the Government. The Government advice for those who require an AHC to travel with pets is that they contact their local vet in the first instance.

There have been some concerns about the cost of procuring an AHC for travel, which are [reported to be between £100-150](#), and in some instances [up to £180](#).

The Government was asked in November 2021 what steps it was taking to incentivise the veterinary profession to minimise the cost of Animal Health

Certificates and to take the necessary qualifications to issue those certificates. [Responding for the Government](#) Jo Churchill said the cost of the certificates is a private matter between individual practices and their customers. She also set actions taken by her Department to address OV shortages:

Animal Health Certificates (AHCs) fees are set by veterinary practices and are a private matter between individual practices and their clients and neither the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the UK regulator of the veterinary profession, nor Defra intervenes in the level of fees that are charged.

We are engaging with the British Veterinary Association to address concerns on veterinary capacity to complete and issue AHCs. We are working to ensure that the process of issuing pet travel documentation is as efficient as possible.

The AHC format is mandated by the EU, but the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has taken steps to help Official Veterinarians (OVs) complete them including the development of a model certificate and accompanying printable guidance. APHA has publicised the availability of the required training course on completing AHCs and has made it easily available on-line which can be accessed by all qualified OVs at any time.<sup>6</sup>

## 4 Government aim for Part 1 listed country

The Government has consistently stated since the changes to pet travel provisions came into force, it continues to raise the issue of Part 1 listing with the EU. The [latest update](#) was provided on the limited progress made was provided in a statement by Jo Churchill, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Innovation and Climate Adaptation), on 8 November 2021:

We are seeking agreement from the European Commission on awarding Great Britain 'Part 1' listed status and recognition of the UK's tapeworm-free status. Achieving these would alleviate the most onerous pet travel rules for all travellers and we see no valid animal health reason for these to not be granted. We have one of the most rigorous pet checking regimes in Europe to protect our biosecurity and have submitted a detailed technical case setting this out and are continuing to engage with the EU on a workable solution.<sup>7</sup>

The [Institute for Government \(IfG\) set out the position of both the UK and EU](#) on pets and addressing the issues with the border with Northern Ireland. The

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<sup>6</sup> [Written Question Export Health Certificates UIN 65537 2 November 2021](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Written Question Export Health Certificates UIN 65537 2 November 2021](#)

EU has not made any proposals on this, but the UK position is that pets should be able to move freely between UK and Northern Ireland. The IfG has highlighted that Part 1 status for the UK would achieve this:

The UK and EU still appear to be far apart on this issue, but is it unlikely to be a key issue in UK–EU discussions. Arrangements for pet travel could be resolved on a UK-wide basis by changes to its third-country listing under the EU Pet Travel Scheme.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [IfG, Northern Ireland protocol: ongoing UK–EU disagreements, 14 October 2021](#)

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