



Urgent Message to Pet Owners

See your vet before November 28th if you plan to travel in Europe after March 2019

As part of the planning process before Brexit next spring, the government has been releasing a series of “advisory” notices for businesses, professions, and the public. On November 6th, the APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency, the part of DEFRA responsible for, among other things, Pet Passports) issued their update.

The bottom line is that if you want to be certain of your pet’s ability to travel to Europe after 28th March 2019, you need to take action this month.

What’s the current situation?

If you’ve been tuning out of the constant babble of news reports about Brexit – and we certainly wouldn’t blame you for doing so! – the EU and UK are trying to negotiate an agreement over how the UK will leave the EU (which is scheduled for 29th March 2019). This is not the same as any future relationship between the UK and the EU but should “sketch out” outline of any future agreement. However, no such agreement has yet been reached, and there is a possibility that no withdrawal agreement will be signed before the cut-off date.

While much can change in the next four and a half months, the UK government has decided to warn people about the “worst case” situation, so that they can prepare, whatever happens with the Brexit negotiations. This is what the update from APHA is about, and what we’re going to look at here – what the situation will be if no deal is agreed.

In the event of a “no-deal Brexit”...

Will I be allowed to travel?

There seems to be no doubt about that – your passport will still be valid, and no country has any plans to ban UK citizens from entering on 29th March. You may require a visa, however, this is beyond the scope of this communication!

Will my pet be allowed to visit EU countries?

Yes – the government states that there will be no ban on travelling. However, you may need to take extra steps to ensure they will be permitted entry if the UK is no longer part of the EU-wide Pet Travel Scheme.

What will the rules be?

The UK will be treated by EU countries as an “unlisted country”, and so pets will have to abide by stricter rules than they do at the moment.

What will I have to do?

As now, your dog, cat or ferret will need to be microchipped and vaccinated against rabies. However (unlike now) they will need a blood test to prove that they are immune to rabies (actually this is a really good thing – some studies suggest that as many as 10% of vaccinated dogs aren’t actually protected against rabies after a single dose of the vaccine!). This blood test will have to take place no

less than 30 days after the vaccination. If your dog was vaccinated some time ago, they may need a booster dose.

The blood test will be sent to an official lab that will certify whether they have enough rabies antibodies to protect them (more than 0.5IU/ml). If they do meet this safe level, this will be recorded in your pet's passport. That said, your pet still cannot travel for at least 3 months after the successful blood test.

Before travelling, your pet must be certified as healthy and fit enough to travel by an OV (a vet who is licensed to do so by the government – usually the same one who gave your dog their rabies jab). This has to happen no more than 10 days before travelling, and you will be issued with a Health Certificate.

What about coming back to the UK?

At the moment, it looks like that isn't going to change at all!

So why is this urgent?

Because getting certified for travel under the new rules will take at least 3, and possibly 4 or more months.

So if you want to travel on 29th March, you will need to...

- Get vaccinated or boosted (if needed) by 28th November
- Get a successful rabies blood test by 27th December
- Get a Health Certificate between 19th and 28th March.

Is it certain this is going to be needed?

No it isn't – the government is hoping to get a deal; however, it is useful to be prepared in case the Brexit negotiations break down.

If you need any more advice, see www.gov.uk/guidance/pet-travel-to-europe-after-brexit guidance, or talk to us! If you definitely need to be travelling with your pet, speak to Watkins & Tasker Vets urgently to make sure you are in a position to tick all the boxes.

Watkins and Tasker Vets would like to express our thanks for this information to our partners at [Vet Help Direct](#) and to David Harris BVSc MRCVS who wrote this article on Tuesday November 6th, 2018