1 HOE LANE
WARE
HERTS
SG12 9LS
Tel. 01920 468874
Fax 01920 444961

77 FORE STREET
HERTFORD
HERTS
SG14 1AL
Tel. 01992 582115
Fax 01992 501922

87 WARE ROAD
HERTFORD
HERTS
SG13 7EE
Tel. 01992 554466
Fax 01992 581039

Taking your pet abroad post January 2012

In some circumstances, dogs and cats can travel to European countries and return to the UK without having to undergo quarantine, provided they fulfil a number of criteria. It is essential that you plan well in advance. Travel to a foreign country, particularly one lucky enough to have a warmer climate than ourselves, also carries with it an increased risk of exposure to novel diseases and bugs that at present are not found in native Britain but there are some things you can do to reduce the risks to your pet.

In order to take your dog or cat abroad, the following criteria are essential:

1) **Identification**. A microchip must be injected into the back of your pet's scruff – this encodes a unique barcode that can identify your pet using a routine scanner similar to those used in the local supermarket! Prior to any of the other requirements for travel, your pet will always be scanned so as to definitively identify him/her for the required documentation.
2) **Rabies vaccination**. Your dog or cat will require a rabies vaccination. Depending on the vaccine that your vet uses, this usually needs repeating every 2 years and rules are extremely strict regarding timing of booster vaccinations. Should a booster vaccine be overdue by even a single day, the whole process of vaccination and waiting times for travel must be repeated every time. It is therefore advisable to plan and repeat vaccinations in advance of the due-by date and we recommend having booster vaccines a few weeks early to avoid any last minute problems.
3) **Passport**. Your vet at this stage will be able to issue a passport. We would suggest your pet does not travel abroad until at least 21 days after the initial vaccination to allow time for your pet's immune system to respond. It is imperative that you discuss the specific timings of your planned travels with your vet well in advance to ensure your pet's travels can go smoothly.

4) **Travel**. Remember, different routes of travel have different requirements and it is important to check with your travel company for the specific requirements they may have. In addition, some countries have their own specific requirements for entry to their country which may take time to comply with. Speak to your vet at the earliest opportunity if you are planning to take your pet abroad.
5) **Return**. When you are returning to the UK, you will have to see a vet within 24 – 48 hours prior to return. They will have to personally administer worming treatment & sign your pet's passport accordingly. The new regulations no longer require additional treatment for ticks as part of the specific regulations, but in the UK we are lucky not to have some of the more dangerous creepy crawlies that inhabit the continent and it would be sensible to apply such treatment at this stage to keep your pet, and others, as protected as possible.

Other risks to your pet.

There are a number of diseases that your pet could be exposed to on the continent to which he/she will not have been exposed in the UK. Some of these cannot be protected against, but there are some precautions that although not a requirement of the PET Passport scheme, are worth considering to try to keep your pet as safe as possible.

1. **Flea/tick treatment**. Although a requirement for re-entering the UK, this is not often a pre-requisite for entry into countries abroad. However it is advisable to ensure your pet is protected for the duration of his/her travels. Ticks are small bugs that bite and suck blood from animals – whilst doing this, they can also transmit some quite nasty diseases. Treating your pet regularly with a prescription preventative drug such as some of the spot-on preparations available from your vet, will kill ticks along with fleas, and reduce the chance of them transmitting such diseases. One such example is monthly application of Frontline Combo Spot-On. It is also worth checking your pet daily for ticks on their skin as early removal will reduce the chance of disease transmission. Speak to us regarding local treatments such as the localised use of Frontline Spray that can kill ticks on contact – don't just pull them off as this can also cause problems!

2. **Worming treatment**. Again, this is a requirement for re-entry to the UK. However, the wormers required for re-entry do not protect against Heartworm – a worm found in Europe but not yet in the UK. There are specific products such as Advocate Spot-on available on prescription from your vet that can be used to protect your pet but these require application at least 1 month before exposure, monthly whilst away, and for at least 2 months on your return.

3. **Protection against Leishmania.** This is a horrible disease transmitted by Sandflies. It is more common in warmer climates such as the south of France and Spain. Protection is best achieved by keeping your pet indoors during times when sandflies are most active – dawn and dusk. Again there are some specific deterrents in the form of collars or spot-on preparations that are available – your vet can advise you as to the use of such specific deterrents.

Do remember that every country is different on its specific requirements and general advice offered. The above is only a guide and it is essential that you discuss your plans with your vet who can give you specific and tailored advice regarding your proposed travel plans. In addition, we are unable to advise on the specific requirements for entry into other countries and recommend that for this you contact DEFRA on www.defra.gov.uk and follow the link to the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) in order to gain the information you require. Remember to plan early and leave plenty of time to fulfil any requirements for travel and return. Happy holidays!