

Re-homing of animals to the Bailiwick of Guernsey from European Union Member States.

Introduction

The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) defines a 'pet animal' as a dog, cat or ferret, accompanied by their owner or a natural person responsible for the animal during their movement, not intended to be sold or transferred to another owner.

Rescue dogs and cats moving from the European Union (EU) for re-homing to the Channel Islands (CI) are not covered by the PETS because they are being moved with the intention of a change of ownership and are not accompanied by their owners. Such movements are treated as commercial movements and have to comply with the rules of the Balai Directive (92/65/EEC) found at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX:31992L0065>.

Balai applies to all animals being transported from an EU rescue centre, foster home or charity to a new owner in the CI's because this involves a transfer of ownership.

Requirements for Commercial Movements of Pets

Commercial consignments must have:

1) Intra Trade Animal Health Certificate (ITAHC) in accordance with Part 1 Annex E of the Balai Directive issued by member state of origin. The original ITAHC must accompany the consignment. Commission Implementing Decision 2013/518/EU contains current version required found at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013D0518>.

This requires that rescue animals entering the CI's must:

- come from a holding registered with the EU Member State of origin
- have subject to a clinical examination 24 hours before dispatch carried out by a vet authorised by the competent authority certifying that the animal is fit and healthy to travel
- have a destination address but this does not have to be Balai approved or registered

Further information can be found at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animal-trade/imports-noneu/iins/live-animals/iins-other-animals-balai/iin-bllv-5/>

2) TRAdE Control and Expert System (TRACES) is a system that monitors the movements of animals and products of animal origin within the EU. The Member State (MS) where the rescue dogs and/or cats originate from will notify the Office of the States Veterinary Officer in the CI's of the impending import. Imports notified through TRACES will include details of the ITAHC.

Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/using-traces-to-trade-in-animals-andanimal-products>

3) Pet Passport. Each animal identified in the ITAHC must travel with a completed valid pet passport modelled on Annex 1 of Commission Regulation 576/2013/EEC found at <http://eurlex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R0576>.

This requires that rescue animals entering the CI's must:

- be identified by a microchip conforming to the International Standards Organisation (ISO) standard 11784 or standard 11785 prior to rabies vaccination
- be vaccinated against rabies after it is 12 weeks of age and in accordance with the recommendation on the vaccine manufacturer's data sheet
- wait for 21 days after a valid vaccination before entry into the CI's
- before entering the CI's all dogs (other than those from Ireland, Finland, Norway or Malta) must be treated for echinococcus (tapeworm), administered by a vet not less than 24 hours and not more than 120 hours (1-5 days) before its scheduled arrival time in the CI's

Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad>.

4) Animal Welfare During Transport is protected by Regulation 1/2005/EU found at <http://eurlex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32005R0001>.

Whilst no person must transport or cause animals to be transported in a way likely to cause injury or undue suffering there are further safeguards for commercial movements of dogs and cats. These include:

- Transporter Authorisation
- Vehicle approval
- Fitness of the animal for the intended journey
- Journey times, feeding and watering instructions.

Additionally:

- The dogs and or cats must stay a further 48 hours at the place of destination indicated on the ITAHC because of welfare requirements of this regulation
- Dogs and cats may be checked at the place of destination by the Office of the States Veterinary Officer within 48 hours of arrival

If any of these conditions are not met the animals must undergo post import quarantine at the importers expense. The CI's do not have any quarantine facilities.

Additional diseases for which rescue dogs are at risk.

Rescue dogs from the Mediterranean countries are at particular risk of a range of Mediterranean diseases spread by flying insects and ticks vectors. Rescue dogs from the Mediterranean could effectively act 'Trojan Dogs' that bring exotic diseases to the Bailiwick and serve as a reservoir for these diseases after their arrival.

Lieshmaniasis

Prospective owners are advised to have dogs screened for Lieshmaniasis prior to export to the CI's. Canine Lieshmaniasis is a Notifiable Disease in Guernsey under the Animal Health Ordinance, 1996.

Rescue dogs should be tested before export to the CI's for both Leishmania antibodies and antigens as an initial indication for the presence of infection. Should a dog test positive for Leishmania it is recommended that it is not exported and that it is re-homed in its country of origin.

Screening Apparently Healthy Rescue Dogs for Leishmania Infection before Export

1. Antibody testing (Serology)

The detection of leishmania-specific IgG antibodies in the serum of dogs using quantitative techniques is very useful in the diagnosis of leishmania infection. It can take a few months for dogs to produce antibodies after infection (up to 22 months, although median is 5 months). This is because the incubation period for leishmania is long. Therefore low antibody levels may not rule out infection especially in young dogs (<6mo).

2. Protozoan parasite (Antigen) testing (Polymerase chain reaction [PCR])

PCR tests are a sensitive and specific technique that can amplify DNA from the protozoan parasite *Leishmania infantum*.

Samples suitable for PCR are tissues in which the parasite is believed to be present. The sensitivity of detection by PCR is, in descending order, bone marrow or lymph node aspirates > skin aspirates > conjunctival swabs > buffy coat (white blood cells) > whole blood.

So although blood is often positive by PCR in clinical leishmania disease, a negative result cannot be used to rule out infection.

Conclusion

It is clear that there are limitations to the screening of rescue dogs for Leishmania. It is therefore important that owners have their dogs checked regularly with their private veterinary practitioner in the Bailiwick for infection with Leishmania.

Ehrlichiosis, Anaplasmosis, Lyme disease and Heartworm

In addition to Leishmaniasis before rehoming dogs from Mediterranean countries they should also be screened for the tick-borne diseases Ehrlichia (Ehrlichiosis), Anaplasmosis and Borrelia (Lyme disease) and the mosquito-borne *Dirofilaria immitis* (heartworm). Similarly if a dog should test positive for antibodies to any of these four infections it is recommended that it is not exported and that it is re-homed in its country of origin.

There is a '4Dx blood test' which screens for antibodies to Ehrlichia, Anaplasma, Borrelia, as well as for antigens to heartworm. <https://www.idexx.com/small-animal-health/products-and-services/snap-4dx-plus-test.html>

Microscopic examination of blood to check for heartworm microfilaria

Unfortunately antigen tests for heartworm will only detect adult heartworms. The time from a dog becoming infected with heartworm larvae from a mosquito bite to adult heartworms infesting the pulmonary artery and the right side of the heart is typically 6 to 7 months. Therefore antigen tests alone, used in the 4DX blood test, will not detect early heartworm infection. A supplementary heartworm test which involves examining a blood sample using a microscope to detect heartworm larvae (microfilariae) which may be seen wriggling. This microscopic technique is quick and cheap and detects many types of heartworm including *Dirofilaria repens* which is zoonotic.

Blood samples should be taken:

- when microfilaria are most active and highest numbers are seen in the blood, usually in the evenings, and;
- from the peripheral circulation because they appear in greatest numbers in capillaries, usually a blood smear from an ear prick.



Conclusion

Despite what tests are carried out for heartworm there is always the possibility that infestation in a dog could be missed (false negatives). For this reason it is recommended that dogs at risk of carrying heartworm are treated with anti-parasitic medication **every three months for 2 years** following their arrival on Guernsey. Fortunately familiar wormers such as Milbemax® tablets (containing milbemycin oxime) and Advocate® spot-on (imidacloprid/moxidectin) Stronghold® spot-on (selamectin) are licenced to control heart worm.

Babesiosis

Babesia canis is a single celled microparasite transmitted by tick bites which infects red blood cells of dogs leading to serious illness including anaemia. Babesia is challenging to visualise in blood samples using a microscope and the most reliable tests are those for Babesia antibodies (serology) and for Babesia antigen (DNA). **While treatment of dogs for ticks prior to import is not mandatory it is recommended to reduce the risk of importing ticks which carry Babesia.**

Tongue worm

Tongue worm (*Linguatula serrata*) has been diagnosed in stray dogs imported into the UK. The adult parasite has an elongated tongue-shape and is found in the nasal cavity. Infected dogs may have a nasal discharge, nose bleed and sneezing, but infection may also be asymptomatic. Dogs are infected by eating raw or undercooked offal from animals such as cows. Dogs imported from Eastern Europe, particularly from the Romania are most likely to be infected and it is recommended that they are routinely treated for this parasite around the time of importation with wormers such as Advocate®, Stronghold® and Milbemax®. Tongue worm is zoonotic and people can become infected from accidentally ingesting worm eggs from their dog's nasal discharge or from the dog's faeces. The human then becomes an intermediate host resulting in infection of organs such as the liver, lungs and eyes.



Scabies

Scabies in dogs (*Sarcoptes scabiei var. canis*) is rare in Guernsey because we do not have a wild reservoir host (foxes) to maintain the disease. Rescue dogs that have not had the benefit of high quality health care are at a greater risk of having scabies. Treating rescue dogs with products such as Advocate®, Milbemax® and Stronghold® around the time of import will eliminate this parasite.

**Summary of diseases that dogs imported from Europe
are at a greater risk of carrying.**

	Agent	Disease	Susceptible Sp.	Vector	Advice
1.	Leishmania	Lieshmaniasis	Dogs / Humans	Sand-flies	Screen + Follow-up checks
2.	Ehrlichia	Ehrlichiosis	Dogs / Humans	Ticks	4Dx Blood Test
3.	Anaplasma	Anaplasmosis	Dogs / Humans	Ticks	4Dx Blood Test
4.	Borrelia	Lyme disease	Dogs / Humans	Ticks	4Dx Blood Test
5.	Dirofilaria	Heartworm	Dogs	Mosquito	Regular worming ¹
6.	Babesia	Babesiosis	Dogs	Ticks	Pre-import tick treatment
7.	Tongue worm	Linguatulosis	Dogs/ Humans	None	Regular worming ¹
8.	Sarcoptes	Scabies	Dogs/ Humans	None	Regular worming ¹

¹ One of the following wormers Advocate®, Stronghold® and Milbemax® every 3 months for 2 years following import.

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