

European Commission Proposes Extension To Pet Movement Derogation

The current movement regulations for pet dogs, cats and ferrets between member European countries might be extended.

By The SmallAnimalChannel News Division

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The European Commission has proposed that the current pet movement requirements in the United Kingdom, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden be extended until Dec. 31, 2011.

In accordance with the current rules, known as the Pet Regulation, pet dogs, cats and ferrets travelling with their owner for noncommercial movements to another Member State must be accompanied by a passport, or when imported from a third country by a certificate, providing proof of a valid anti-rabies vaccination.

The regulation also grants a transitional period expiring June 30, 2010, to the five Member States to make the entry of pet animals into their territory subject to compliance with certain additional requirements in relation to rabies, the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis* or ticks.

The derogation*, which would extend the June 2010 date until December 2011, will help retain stricter controls, according to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. For example, the requirements include blood testing, quarantine and tick and tapeworm treatments.

"Extending our transitional rules will allow us to benefit from the outcome of the current EU vaccination campaign," said Nigel Gibbens, chief veterinary officer, Defra. "This is working to control rabies in wildlife in the few EU Member States still affected and so bring the rabies risk across Europe to a very low level. The successful control of rabies across Europe should pave the way for the U.K. to move to modernized and harmonized pet movement rules across the EU.

"This additional 18 month period will give time to further review controls to ensure that they are practical, effective and proportionate to the risk of rabies and the specific threats to human health that they are designed to protect against.

"No rules can protect against all diseases that pets might catch when abroad. We will continue to work with the veterinary profession and others to ensure that pet owners understand that travel might bring risks to the health and welfare of their pets, in the same way that they consider any risks to their own health."

The British Veterinary Association and the British Small Animal Veterinary Association both recently welcomed the European Commission's announcement.

"Together with the BSAVA, we believe the existing transitional arrangements are an important tool in balancing the free movement of animals with the risk of spreading zoonotic diseases such as rabies, echinococcosis and leishmaniasis," said Nicky Paull, BVA president.

"An extension to the derogation would at least now give us time to work closely with Defra and our European colleagues in seeking data to enable a quantitative risk assessment to be undertaken. We shall continue to lobby vociferously to maintain our current restrictions to protect both our pets and our people."

The proposal still needs to be agreed to by the European Parliament and Council.

* According to Wikipedia.org, the term derogation in relation to European Union legislation can mean: "A member state delays the implementation of an element of an EU Regulation (etc) into their legal system over a given timescale, such as five years; or that a member state has opted not to enforce a specific provision in a treaty due to internal circumstances (typically a state of emergency)."