
Travelling Abroad, Parasites and Exotic Diseases

Considerations

There are many pet diseases abroad that we do not see in the UK, several of which are transmitted by biting insects and ticks. Pets from the UK will be highly susceptible to these diseases and they can be life-threatening. We advise a health check and pre-travel consultation 3 weeks before you depart to discuss the diseases you may encounter, how you can best protect your pet and when to start preventative health care so that it will be fully active in time for your arrival abroad. These measures also reduce the risk of bringing these diseases back home. Here are some of the more common exotic pet diseases;

Babesiosis

Seen mainly in dogs and transferred by ticks from dog to dog. It is widely distributed in Europe, causing many symptoms including fever and bleeding. Antibiotics are used to treat early infections but chronic disease can be difficult to treat and cause serious health problems.

Hepatozoonosis

Seen mainly in dogs and acquired by a dog or cat grooming and eating an infected tick. Signs are often not seen until the pet has another illness. Treatment is difficult and medication may be unavailable.

Leishmaniasis

Spread by sandflies and found in all tropical areas including around the Mediterranean. Sandflies actually live predominantly in wooded areas. Signs are primarily of skin disease and occur months to years later. Treatment is difficult and doesn't always work. Untreated it is a fatal disease.

Heartworm

Mainly seen in dogs although cats are also at risk. Certain mosquitoes seen widely in Europe carry it and signs develop over several months. These include a cough, weight loss, reduced exercise and sudden death from bleeding. Treatment is very difficult and often has side effects.

Brucellosis

A disease of dogs that causes miscarriage, still birth and sperm defects. It is found in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. Infection is from birth materials. Treatment is long antibiotic courses and can fail.

Rabies

Rabies is invariably fatal and is a significant zoonosis (can be transmitted to people). The UK is free from the virus in the UK. A preventative vaccination is available and required by law for travelling pets.

Echinococcus multilocularis tapeworm

Widespread in Europe and can easily infect dogs without signs, but in humans it is potentially fatal, predominantly affecting the liver. The UK is free from this parasite at the moment. By law you must treat your dog before re-entering the UK to protect us from it.

How to Protect Your Pet and Yourself

Tick Control

Avoidance – avoid areas where ticks are commonly found; woodland, meadows and near livestock.

Prevention – use collars or spot-ons started before and continued throughout your trip. Please talk to us about effective products.

Check your pet – at least once daily and remove any ticks you see because these diseases may not be transferred in the first 24 hours of tick feeding. We can explain how to safely remove ticks and provide you with an appropriate tool.

Sandflies

If travelling to high risk areas consider leaving your dog in the UK.

Reduce exposure – keep animals inside from one hour before dusk to one hour after dawn when sandflies are most active. Don't let pets sleep outside. Use insecticides to reduce levels inside your accommodation.

Repellents – use on your pet to reduce risk. Start 3 weeks before and continue during your whole trip. Please talk to us about effective products.

Vaccination – a vaccination for Leishmania is now available prior to travel. Please contact us for more information.

Mosquitoes

Avoidance – avoid mosquito infected areas with your pet or leave them behind.

Reduce exposure – repellents reduce biting but have only moderate efficacy.

Prevention - preventative treatment is the effective and safe approach. Please talk to us about what products are effective. Treatment should commence at least 3 weeks before departure, continue during, and for a complete month after your trip.

Tapeworm

Treatment – this is the easiest way to prevent this disease from affecting humans and coming in to the UK. By law dogs must have a tapeworm treatment, administered by a vet, 24-120 hours (1 -5 days) before re-entering the UK. If you are staying abroad for a long time we recommend monthly worming. Please talk to us about what products are effective.

Hygiene – humans are at a small risk of infection from the eggs of the parasite from dog and fox faeces, their coats, the soil or contaminated foods. Practice good hand hygiene before eating and wash all fruits and vegetables etc.

Further Information

In all cases, please consult your vet if you see any signs of these diseases in your pet, whether it be days, months or even years after travel.

Many of these diseases can be diagnosed by a blood test and treatment is usually easier and more successful the earlier it is started.

For further information please visit;

www.bva-awf.org.uk/resources/leaflets/AWF_Pets_abroad.pdf

www.esccapuk.org.uk