

Taking pets abroad

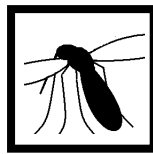
While the pet travel scheme (PETS) is designed to prevent the spread of diseases around Europe, it does not protect individual pets from disease. Our British pets, when taken abroad, are exposed to diseases that are not present in the UK. It is important to take precautions to protect them from these diseases as they will have no natural immunity.

The four most important diseases to consider are Leishmania, Babesia, Ehrlichia and Heartworm.



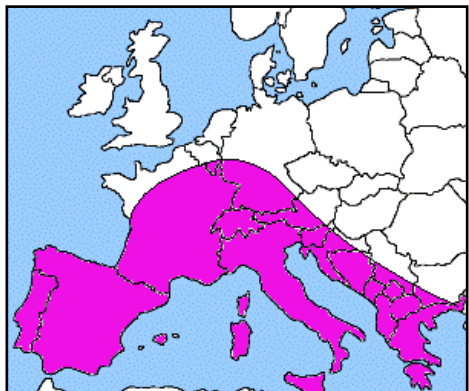
Leishmania

Leishmania is a parasite that infects immune cells, and it is spread by sand flies. It causes disease affecting the joints, skin, eyes, and kidneys, and symptoms include lameness, hair loss, skin scaling and weight loss. The disease is often gradual in onset, affecting dogs several months or even years after travel. Leishmania is seen in the Mediterranean basin – particularly Spain, Italy and Greece, although its distribution is spreading northwards.



Prevention

Use human insect repellents, and keep pets indoors at night. Fans will help to keep mosquitoes away.



Babesia

Babesia is a parasite that infects red blood cells. It is spread by ticks. The disease causes anaemia and jaundice due to red blood cell damage. Babesia is seen throughout France, Spain, Portugal and the Mediterranean countries. Cases are also increasingly being reported in Germany, Austria and Belgium.



Prevention

Use of the tick repellent deltamethrin (Scalibor collar or Advantix spot-on). Frontline spray can also be applied weekly to face and legs. Check face and legs daily for ticks.



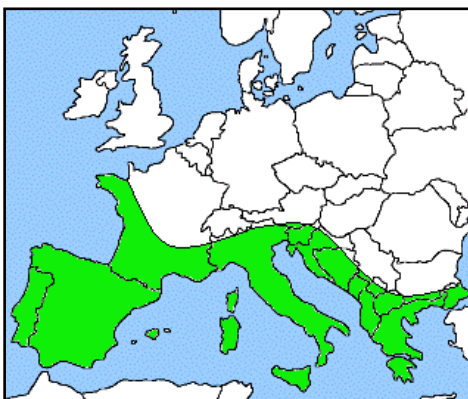
Ehrlichia

Ehrlichia is a parasite infecting white blood cells and platelets – the cells involved in blood clotting. Like Babesia, it is spread by ticks, and combined infections with Babesia or Leishmania are common. Symptoms include fever, bruising and internal bleeding. Ehrlichia is seen in North Africa, southern France, Spain and Portugal, and the Mediterranean countries.



Prevention

Tick control, as for Babesia.



Heartworm

Heartworm is a parasite spread by mosquitoes. The worms migrate to the major arteries and heart, where they cause heart and lung disease. Symptoms include coughing, heavy breathing, and reduced exercise tolerance. Heartworm is seen throughout Spain and Portugal as well as southern and western France, Italy, and the eastern Mediterranean countries.



Prevention

Use human insect repellents and keep dogs indoors at night. Monthly treatment with milbemycin (Milbemax wormer) or moxidectin (Advocate spot-on) starting one month before travel, and continuing for one month after travel, will also prevent the worms.

Are cats at risk?

Cats are much less susceptible to these diseases than dogs, although infections have been reported. **Deltamethrin (Scalibor, Advantix) must not be used in cats** as it is toxic and potentially fatal. Tick control with weekly frontline, however, is safe. Monthly milbemax is also advisable.