

EXOTIC DISEASES:

INFORMATION FOR PET OWNERS

IMPORTANT NEWS FOR OWNERS

OF ANIMALS TRAVELLING ABROAD!

The bad news:

Since the Pets Travel Scheme (PETS) was introduced in 2000, there have been an increasing number of animals returning to the UK with 'exotic' diseases. There is concern that some of these diseases may become endemic to the UK with potentially serious consequences for both human and animal health.

The following lists some of these diseases and how pets may pick up infection:

| DISEASE | SPREAD BY |
|--|--|
| Leishmaniosis | Sandflies |
| Heartworm | Mosquitos |
| Babesiosis Ehrlichiosis | Ticks |
| <i>Echinococcus multilocularis</i> tapeworm | Small rodents (if eaten) |
| Rabies | Bite/saliva from another infected mammal |

The current PETS legislation requires that animals travelling abroad are vaccinated against rabies and are treated for tapeworms before re-entering the UK. On 1st January 2012 the compulsory requirement to treat for ticks before entering the UK was lifted. The aim of the PETS legislation has always been to protect human health rather than animal health and following these guidelines alone will not guarantee the health of animals travelling abroad.

The distribution of many of the above 'exotic' diseases is changing rapidly. This may be due to better surveillance and diagnosis, which allows us to map parasite and disease distribution better, but it may also be due to changing climates allowing vectors, e.g. mosquitos, to increase their geographical range. Increased animal travel generally allows greater spread of disease, just as human travel can increase the spread of disease.

The good news:

More information is now available to UK vets to help us assess the risk of disease to animals travelling abroad and we are now better able to advise pet owners on disease prevention protocols. There are a number of products available that can help reduce the risk of pet exposure to insects and ticks that spread disease, and for the control of tapeworms which can present potentially serious problems for human health should infected dogs enter the UK. However there is no single treatment that covers all the parasites. An assessment of the risks facing each pet is needed, which will depend on which countries the pet will be going to and the time of year the travel will be taking place.

If you would like to receive further advice about appropriate disease prevention measures for your pets whilst travelling abroad, please contact us and ask for a **Travel Clinic** appointment. Please bring to the clinic all the PETS travel documentation that you currently have and your planned itinerary.

SUMMARY OF DISEASES AND PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

| Information | Prevention | Relevant to you? |
|---|--|------------------|
| <p>Leishmaniosis is an infectious and potentially fatal disease caused by a protozoan parasite common in Mediterranean coastal areas and transmitted by phlebotomine sand flies. Despite the name, which relates to their brownish colour, the flies are found in woodlands and crevices in old buildings. The sand flies are active from May to October and feed mainly at dusk and dawn.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid sandflies • Use insect repellents containing synthetic pyrethroids (do not use in cats) - for example, Advantix spot-on or Seresto collar • Vaccination is available; 3 doses needed at 3-week intervals; immunity 4 weeks after final dose; not 100% effective, but may be worthwhile | |
| <p>Heartworm disease is caused by the nematode worm <i>Dirofilaria immitis</i>. The disease is endemic in Mediterranean areas. Dogs are the primary host however cats can be susceptible. Infection is spread by blood sucking mosquitoes during feeding. Many mosquitoes are capable of transmitting the parasite including species present in the UK.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use insect repellents containing synthetic pyrethroids (do not use in cats) - for example, Advantix spot-on or Seresto collar • preventive treatments containing Milbemycin (Program Plus or Milbemax or Nexgard Spectra tablets) or Selamectin (Stronghold spot-on) should be given throughout the mosquito season starting one month before exposure. | |
| <p>Babesiosis and Ehrlichiosis are protozoan blood parasites transmitted by ticks. They are endemic in much of Europe and cause a variety of serious illnesses</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use topical treatments which repel ticks as well as killing them - for example, Advantix spot-on or Seresto collar - or oral treatments which are proven to work fast enough to prevent disease transmission, eg Nexgard Spectra or Bravecto • Remove any ticks you find attached to the pet as soon as possible | |
| <p>Echinococcus multilocularis is the fox tapeworm. Dogs become infected by eating voles and other small rodents. Eggs passed by an infected dog or fox are immediately infective to people. A dog's coat contaminated with fox faeces has high risk of containing infective eggs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use praziquantel-based de-wormer every month - eg Milbemax • Pets entering UK must be wormed 24-120 hours before, and be recorded on passport • Wash fox faeces from dogs' coats thoroughly | |
| <p>Rabies - transmitted by bites (saliva) from infected mammal</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccination. A single dose confers immunity for up to 3 years (depending on vaccine brand). Passport must be signed & stamped to be valid. However, some countries insist on more frequent re-vaccination in particular circumstances. For example, any dog going onto a French campsite must be vaccinated annually. | |

Please note:

Topical insect repellents and insecticides must be applied as recommended by the manufacturers. Remember that frequent bathing or immersion will reduce the effectiveness and the product may need to be reapplied more often.

Repellents alone cannot be relied upon for disease prevention, and additional measures should be taken wherever possible.