



Brexit: opportunities for pet animal welfare

FROM THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

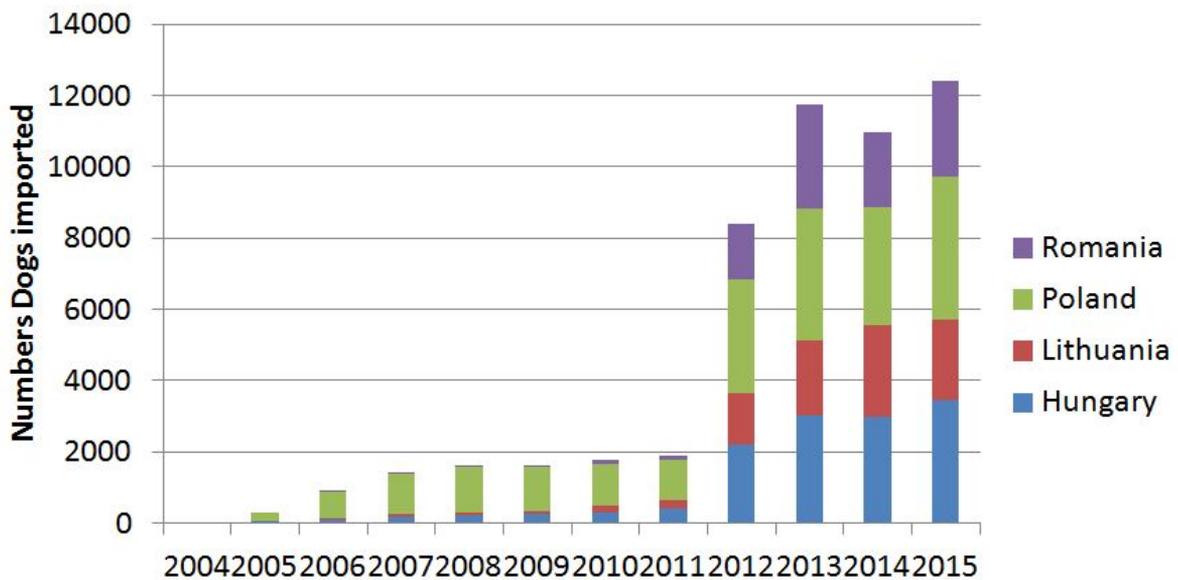
Introduction

Although the UK sees itself as operating some of the highest animal welfare standards for pet animals, examples exist where it has fallen behind some other countries in some areas. For instance the RSPCA has in the past few years set out some of the problems that exist with the present legislation on imports of dogs and cats¹. Although most pet animal legislation is devolved, leaving the EU provides England and Wales with opportunities to go further in those areas where there is existing European legislation. This position paper highlights those opportunities for pet animals.

The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS)

PETS was changed in 2012 to further harmonise travel across Europe. This resulted in a relaxation of the UK’s quarantine controls. Defra figures (Figure 1) showed that the number of dogs entering Great Britain via PETS increased by 61% in the first year of controls being relaxed. The number of dogs entering Great Britain under PETS in 2011 was 85,299 and this figure continues to increase year on year with 152,075 entering in 2013 and 164,836 entering in 2015. There has been a noticeable increase in imports of puppies and dogs from certain central and eastern European countries such as Hungary, Lithuania, Romania and Poland (see Fig 1).

Figure 1 Numbers of dogs imported under PeTS from four EU countries 2004-15



The number of Lithuanian dogs travelling into Great Britain under PETS increased by 850% between 2011 and 2015. The number of Hungarian dogs travelling into Great Britain under PETS increased by 760% in the same period. Investigations have found that PETS is regularly used as a

¹ RSPCA. 2016. Sold a pup - exposing the breeding, trade and sale of puppies; RSPCA 2013 Pushing at an open door - how the present UK controls on rabies are failing

cover to import puppies into Great Britain for commercial purposes¹. They have also revealed the fraudulent issuing of pet passports with falsified data, the importation of underage puppies and issues with controls at the UK border.

Figures from Defra also show that the number of cats entering the UK under PETS has also increased dramatically with 8,220 cats entering in 2011, 14,147 in 2013 and 21,404 in 2015. We are concerned that the increased number of animals coming into the UK, together with concerns about enforcement of the legislation, presents a disease risk. For example, if dogs and cats are not appropriately treated against the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis*, there is a risk of this zoonotic parasite being introduced into the UK. There are also other diseases which are not covered in the current legislation, yet have great potential to compromise animal health in the UK. This includes leishmaniosis, ehrlichiosis and babesiosis.

For these reasons, the decision for the UK to exit the EU provides a good opportunity to review and amend the legislation governing pet travel and disease control. Below is outlined the existing EU legislation that applies to dogs and cats, with our key recommendations for improvements to each:

Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 on the non-commercial movement of pet animals; Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 577/2013; Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1152/2011

Regulation No 576/2013 sets out the requirements for dogs, cats and ferrets which are moved for non-commercial purposes between EU Member States or into the EU. This is otherwise known as the Pet Travel Scheme and requires all dogs, cats and ferrets which are moved between or into Member States to be microchipped, vaccinated against rabies and to have a valid pet passport. The Implementing Regulation No 577/2013 sets out the model identification documents for pet movement. Delegated Regulation No 1152/2011 requires dogs being moved into four Member States to be treated against the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis* from 120 to 24 hours before travel. The UK is one of these Member States. The key improvements we recommend to the legislation on non-commercial pet travel are:

- **Rabies antibody titration test.** It has always been known that a small but significant number of animals do not mount an adequate immune response following vaccination against rabies. Mansfield *et al.* 2004 found that 4.12% of dogs and 2.85% of cats tested failed to demonstrate sufficient antibodies². A recent study has shown that a significant proportion (53%) of imported rescue dogs from Eastern Europe failed to demonstrate a sufficient antibody level. Moreover, 41 per cent of the dogs had woefully inadequate antibody levels³. We therefore recommend the reintroduction of rabies blood testing before entry into the UK.
- **Post rabies antibody titration test wait period.** Under Regulation 576/2013 dogs, cats and ferrets entering a Member State from a Third Country or Territory must undergo a rabies antibody titration test. The validity requirements are for the blood test to be carried out at least 30 days after the date of vaccination and for there then to be a 3 month wait period before the pet animal is moved between countries. The average incubation period

² Mansfield, K. L., Sayers R., Fooks A. R., Burr, P. D. and Snodgrass D. (2004). Factors affecting the serological response of dogs and cats to rabies vaccination. *Veterinary Record*; 154:423-426

³ Klevar, S., Høgåsen H. R., Davidson R. K., Hamnes I. S., Treiberg Berndtsson L., and Lund A. (2015). Cross-border transport of rescue dogs may spread rabies in Europe. *Veterinary Record*; 176:672

for naturally occurring rabies in dogs, cats and ferrets varies depending on the reference, with some sources stating 3-8 weeks⁴ and others stating 3-12 weeks. To minimise the risk of disease we would support a wait period after the rabies blood test before entry into the UK, of six weeks which is in line with the incubation period of rabies. Such a wait period would also make it easier to differentiate between adult dogs and those that are too young to legally enter the country.

- Tick treatment. We recommend that a requirement is reintroduced for dogs to be treated against ticks before entering the UK, to prevent parasites such as *Babesia canis* and *Ehrlichia canis* being introduced into the UK. This could be based on the previous requirement for tick treatment, although we would prefer the treatment window to be shortened to reduce the risk of reinfection prior to travel.
- Tapeworm treatment. We support the continued requirement for tapeworm treatment before entry into the UK but recommend shortening the treatment window before entry into the UK from 120 hours to 48 hours as previously required. We would support the introduction of tapeworm treatment for cats.
- Centrally accessible database. Currently, there is no traceability when welfare organisations take in dogs and cats with a microchip from another country, and it is not possible to tell if the animal came into the country legally. The development of a centrally accessible database logging dogs' microchip numbers, and other relevant information, at the point of entry into the UK would help welfare organisations to undertake a risk assessment for such animals and in the event of a disease outbreak it would enable control measures to be most effective.
- Carriers. We question whether enforcement of the legislation on pet movement should be left to carriers rather than government agencies.

Council Directive 92/65/EEC of 13 July 1992 laying down animal health requirements governing trade in and imports into the Community of animals, semen, ova and embryos; Directive 2013/31/EU amending Council Directive 92/65/EEC

Directive 92/65/EEC (often referred to as the Balai Directive) sets out the animal health requirements for animals being moved between or into Member States for commercial purposes. When more than five dogs, cats and ferrets are being moved, this Directive also applies regardless of whether the movement is for a commercial purpose (unless the animals are being moved for the purpose of participating in competitions, exhibitions or sporting events). This Directive also applies to the movement of animals for rehoming purposes, i.e. any animal that is being moved for the sole purpose of change of ownership is considered to be a commercial activity, irrespective of any financial gain, and must therefore comply with this Directive. Directive 2013/31/EU amends Directive 92/65/EEC to bring it in line with the requirements for dogs, cats and ferrets under Regulation No 576/2013 (see above).

In addition to the requirements set out in Regulation No 576/2013, these Directives require that animals must come from a holding or business registered in the EU country of origin. Importers must obtain a health certificate (issued from the European Commission's TRACES website) for each movement of animals. An authorised vet must carry out a clinical examination of each

⁴ Greene, C. E. (2012). Rabies and other Lyssavirus infections. In: Infectious diseases of the dog and cat, 4th Edition. Saunders-Elsevier, London, pp.187.

animal ensuring they are fit to travel, within 48 hours before travel. The key improvement we recommend to the legislation on the commercial movement of pets is:

- 100% Checks at point of destination. We have serious concerns that there is currently a lack of checks at seaports and the Eurotunnel for compliance with Directive 92/65/EEC, as checks take place at the arrival destination. Furthermore, currently only up to 10% of consignments are checked at the place of destination. This is extremely concerning as there is clear potential for cases of illegal importations to be missed and so this should be addressed in future legislation.

Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations

The transport of dogs and cats in the EU in connection with an economic activity is governed by Regulation No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport. This requires that the animals are fit to travel - cats and dogs of less than eight weeks cannot be transported unless they are accompanied by their mother - and must not be transported in a way likely to cause them injury or undue suffering. Cats and dogs transported over less than 50 km are not covered by these rules. The European Commission had committed to adopting detailed rules for the transport of dogs and cats after the adoption of an opinion on this topic by the European Food Safety Authority. Despite this opinion being published in May 2004, the European Commission has never proposed any additional rules to cover dogs and cats. The key improvement we recommend to the legislation on the welfare of dogs and cats during transport is:

- Specific requirements for the transport of cats and dogs. Specific requirements to ensure the welfare of dogs and cats should be introduced in future legislation.

Regulation (EC) No 1523/2007 banning the placing on the market and the import to, or export from, the Community of cat and dog fur, and products containing such fur

Regulation No 1523/2007 places a ban on the sale of dog and cat fur within the EU, as well as its import or export. Our position on this legislation is:

- Retain the ban on dog and cat fur. We support the retention on the ban on cat and dog fur due to the inherent cruelty in this trade as there could be incentives for the trade to re-start into the UK should the ban be rescinded. This would be unacceptable to the British public and must be prevented.

Regulation (EU) 2016/429 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law')

Regulation 2016/429 was adopted in March 2016. It streamlines almost 40 EU legal acts related to animal health into a single law. Intended as a framework law, the Regulation itself only lays down general principles and basic rules. This is an important new Regulation as it will repeal both Regulation 576/2013 and Directive 92/65 (both outlined above). Although the Animal Health Law will apply from 21 April 2021, Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 shall continue to apply until 21 April 2026. Detailed provisions under the Animal Health Law are still to be established by delegated or implementing acts. Our key recommendation on this legislation is:

- Input into delegated and implementing acts. Although the UK has committed to exiting the EU, ensuring that the Animal Health Law is as robust as possible is still in the UK's interest.

Dogs and cats travelling to the EU from the UK will still have to comply with this Regulation. We therefore recommend that the UK Government continues to input into EU negotiations on the relevant implementing and delegated acts under the Animal Health Law.