

The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS)

Advice to veterinary surgeons in GB: ferrets

22nd March 2011

Introduction

- European Regulation 998/2003 took effect on 3 July 2004. It sets out the rules for pet animals travelling between European Union (EU) countries and into the EU from other countries.
- This fact sheet contains advice on the veterinary requirements for preparing ferrets to travel under the Regulation. It replaces “*Advice to veterinary surgeons in GB: ferrets*” dated March 2005.
- There is a separate fact sheet for vets on preparing dogs and cats under the Regulation (dated October 2005).
- Defra, in conjunction with the Devolved Authorities, also produces fact sheets for pet owners travelling with their dogs and cats, ferrets, and pet rabbits and rodents to and from other EU countries, and from non-EU countries to the UK. Please advise your clients to get the appropriate fact sheets from one of the Defra, Scottish Executive or NAWDEPC contact points in part 4.

PART 1. THE RULES

To **re-enter the UK without quarantine** from a country listed in Annex A, a ferret must, in this order, be microchipped and vaccinated against rabies. It must also be issued with an EU pet passport and treated against ticks and tapeworms. These procedures are explained in part 2.

For ferrets travelling **from the UK to other countries** see part 3.

There are no requirements for ferrets travelling directly between the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

As of 26th May 2010, a limit of five animals (dogs, cats and ferrets only) is applicable per person for all importations into and around the European Union, regardless of the exporting country. This limit was introduced by the European Parliament and Council and is applicable to **all** listed countries

The 6 month or 21 day rule for entering the UK

(a) Ferrets from non-EU listed countries

A ferret may not re-enter the UK under PETS from a non-EU listed country until 6 calendar months have passed from the date it was vaccinated against rabies. This applies whether it enters direct or via an EU country. For example, if a vaccination is given on 1 January, the animal can enter the UK from 1 July.

(b) Ferrets from EU countries

Ferrets may not enter the UK under PETS from an EU country from an EU country until 21 days have passed from the date of its first rabies vaccination. However, if the vaccine manufacturer's datasheet requires more than one vaccination to complete the primary vaccination protocol, the 21 day wait applies from the date of the final vaccination of that protocol.

The 6 month rule applies to ferrets entering the UK from an EU country via a non-EU listed country.

Ferrets must undertake the 6 month or 21 day wait only once **provided** the subsequent rabies booster vaccinations are given by the required date.

Rules on travelling to the UK and veterinary procedures in other countries are explained in the fact sheet on ferrets for pet owners.

These rules are to protect human and animal health and to reduce the risk of importing rabies into the UK. Ferrets not meeting all the rules must be licensed into quarantine.

What vets can do

Any registered veterinary surgeon can microchip, vaccinate and record the treatment in the passport. In Great Britain, only Panel 2 Local Veterinary Inspectors (LVI) may complete the boxes in section IV of the passport headed "Authorised Veterinarian" to verify the details given about the rabies vaccination.

PART 2. PROCEDURES

(a) Microchip identification

We recommend that the microchip conforms to ISO Standard 11784 or Annex A to ISO Standard 11785. If it doesn't, it may be impossible to read it when the animal is checked in another PETS country. The pet owner is then required to provide a microchip reader to enable it to be read.

Reading a microchip

We recommend that you obtain a suitable microchip reader before offering the PETS service to clients so that animals can be properly identified when the following procedures are carried out. If using a client's microchip reader, test it first against an inanimate object to ensure it does not give a reading.

If a microchip cannot be read, you should not proceed until the problem is resolved. If you cannot read a microchip, contact your local Animal Health Divisional Office (AHDO) to ask if they have a different type of reader you can borrow.

Fitting a microchip

A ferret must be microchipped *before* it is vaccinated against rabies. Check that the microchip can be read before and after it has been fitted. Record the microchip number on the vaccination record and passport. **This must be done by reading the microchip and not on the basis of any accompanying documentation. The microchip must be read before any subsequent entry is made in the passport.**

(b) Rabies vaccination

- Ferrets must be at least 3 months old before being vaccinated.
- You must administer an authorised inactivated vaccine. If there is no authorised veterinary medicinal product available, you are able to use another inactivated product under the "prescribing cascade" which is detailed in EC Directive 2001/82. Further guidance is available from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) guidance note AMELIA 8 which is available on the VMD website (www.vmd.gov.uk) or ring the VMD on 01932 338320.

If you need advice on the validity period for the vaccination please contact the vaccine manufacturer.

- Before vaccinating the animal, you *must* check that its microchip can be read and that the number matches your records or other accompanying documentation. You can vaccinate any time *after* the microchip has been fitted.
- If an animal has been vaccinated before it was microchipped, it will have to be vaccinated again.

Record of vaccination

Enter the following details on the ferret's vaccination record and in section IV of the passport:

- vaccine manufacturer and product name
- batch number
- date of vaccination
- the date by which the booster vaccination must be given (calculated by reference to the validity period of the vaccine given in the vaccine manufacturer's data sheet).
- An LVI must then stamp and sign the passport

Revaccination (boosters)

After an animal has been vaccinated, it must be given booster vaccinations to remain qualified for PETS. This must be done by the "Valid until" date on the animal's passport or third country official veterinary certificate (*see (d) below*) and recorded in section IV of the passport. Read the microchip, and check the number matches your records and the pet's documentation, before revaccination.

If a ferret has not been revaccinated by the valid until date, it will have to be vaccinated again. The 21 day wait for export, and the 6 month wait for re-entry from a non-EU listed country, will apply from the date of the new vaccination. Record in section XI of the passport that the vaccination given on dd.mm.yy is no longer valid for entry to the UK from non-EU listed countries. For a form of words see the guidance notes on completing a passport on the PETS website (see "What vets need to do"). Please advise the pet owner of the 6 month and 21 day rules (*see parts 1a and 3*).

(c) EU pet passport

Issuing a passport

A passport may only be issued for a ferret if all of the following requirements are met:

- it shows no clinical signs of rabies
- its microchip can be read and the same number is shown on the vaccination record
- it has a current rabies vaccination given after it was microchipped

An official veterinary certificate headed "*Veterinary certificate for pet dogs, cats and ferrets entering the European Community for non-commercial movements (Regulation (EC) No 998/2003)*" issued in a non-EU **listed** country is acceptable as the basis for issuing a passport. It must be accompanied by the animal's vaccination record which must show the animal's microchip number. The animal must have been revaccinated against

rabies by the "Valid until" date in section 4. See part 2(b) if this date has been missed. Listed countries are shown in Annex A.

Using a passport

To check when a ferret will be able to leave and re-enter the UK, read the section on the 6 month rule in part 1 and the 21 day rule in part 3. Owners can continue to use the passport for their ferret to enter the UK **provided** the pet is revaccinated by the "Valid until" date in section IV. For travelling from the UK to other EU countries, see part 3.

Ferrets must also have a current treatment for ticks and tapeworms at the time of return to the UK (see **(d)** below).

Updating or renewing the passport

A Panel 2 LVI must sign and stamp section IV each time a booster vaccination is given (*see part 2(b) if the date is missed*). When the passport is full, a new one should be issued.

If a passport is lost, a new one can be issued on the basis of supporting evidence (vaccination record showing the animal's microchip number which must be read and checked against the number on the supporting documentation).

(d) Treatment against ticks and tapeworms

Before re-entering the UK under PETS, ferrets must be treated by a vet against ticks and the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis*.

The treatment must be carried out not less than 24 hours and not more than 48 hours before the pet is checked-in to travel back to the UK. It must be given **every time** a pet enters the UK. You will only need to administer this to ferrets leaving the UK on short trips when it must be given before departure to meet the timing requirement.

The animal's microchip number must be read before treatment and match the number in section III of the passport.

Treatment

This treatment must be given following the prescribing cascade procedure explained in part 2(b).

The tapeworm treatment must contain *praziquantel* and be administered in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

The tick treatment must be a veterinary product which has marketing authorisation in the country of use and is licensed for use against ticks. A tick collar is not acceptable.

Recording the treatment

Sections VI and VII of the passport must be completed to certify that the treatment has been administered. Fill in the name of the manufacturer and product, the *date* and *time* of treatment (using the 24 hour clock), and sign and stamp the passport with the practice stamp.

PART 3. TAKING FERRETS OUT OF GB

EU countries

To travel from the UK to another EU country, a ferret must be microchipped (although some countries accept a tattoo), vaccinated against rabies and issued with an EU pet passport. Malta has additional entry requirements and to enter Sweden a ferret must be treated for tapeworms with a product containing praziquantel no more than 10 days before entry. Pet owners should be advised to contact their local Animal Health Divisional Office or the authorities (e.g. the Embassy) of the country they wish to enter to check the requirements. There are no requirements for ferrets travelling directly between the UK and the Republic of Ireland. For rules to re-enter the UK see parts 1 and 2.

- ***21 day wait***

For EU countries where more stringent entry requirements do not apply, the EU has introduced a wait of 21 days from the date of the first rabies vaccination before a ferret can enter those EU countries. However, if the vaccine manufacturer's datasheet requires more than one vaccination to complete the primary vaccination protocol, the 21 day wait applies from the date of the final vaccination of that protocol.

Booster vaccinations are valid for entry from the date given **provided** they are given on time.

Non-EU listed countries

To enter a non-EU listed country, ferrets may need an export health certificate or an import permit, although a few of these countries accept a passport. Some of these countries require an animal to have been vaccinated against rabies within a specified period before it arrives so you might need to revaccinate some pets against rabies before the booster is due. Other treatments may also be necessary. Pet owners should be advised to obtain more information from their local Animal Health Office.

Residence

If a ferret stays in another EU or non-EU listed country it may become subject to that country's rules on residence. Owners should be advised to check with the authorities of the country what those rules are and what implications becoming resident will have for their pet. For example, some countries require certain resident pets to have an annual rabies vaccination.

Health and welfare

We advise owners to consult their vet about their pet's fitness to travel abroad and to ask about any preventative treatment against the risk of infection (e.g. for heartworm) depending on where it is going.

If a ferret becomes ill after returning to GB, please ask the owner where it has been so that you can consider diseases not normally found here.

Owners are also recommended to consider their pet's welfare needs when travelling abroad and whether it will benefit from travelling with them.

PART 4. MORE INFORMATION

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

PETS

- Website: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/index.htm
- Helpline: 0870 241 1710 (Monday to Friday - 08.30 to 17.00 UK time)
- E-mail: pets.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk (enclose your postal address and daytime telephone number)
- Fax: 01245 351162

Quarantine

- Website: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/rabies/default.htm
- Telephone: 01245 458739
- E-mail: quarantine@defra.gsi.gov.uk
- Fax: 01245 351162

Scottish Government

- Telephone: 0300 244 9243
- E-mail: animal.health@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
- Fax: 0300 244 9797

National Assembly for Wales Department of Environment, Planning and Countryside (NAWDEPC)

- Telephone: 01286 662027 (English and Welsh)
- E-mail: AnimalByProductsCaernarfon@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Annex A

The listed countries

UK-resident ferrets can travel to any of the countries on the next page and return to the UK under PETS. Ferrets coming from any of these countries can also enter the UK under PETS. Ferrets must not have been outside any of these countries in the six months before travelling to the UK. All ferrets entering the UK under PETS must do so using an approved transport company and route. Please advise clients to contact Defra, Scottish Executive or NAWDEPC for more information.

These countries are subject to change. For the latest situation see the PETS website or ring the Helpline.

(a) EU countries and territories

Austria	Estonia	Hungary	Netherlands
Azores	Faroe Islands	Ireland ³	Poland
Balearic Islands	Finland	Italy	Portugal
Belgium	France	Latvia	Réunion
Bulgaria	French Guiana	Lithuania	Romania
Canary Islands	Germany	Luxembourg	Slovakia
Ceuta	Gibraltar	Madeira	Slovenia
Cyprus ¹	Greece	Malta	Spain
Czech Republic	Greenland	Martinique	Sweden
Denmark	Guadeloupe ²	Melilla	

¹ Ferrets prepared for PETS in, or returning under PETS to the UK from, the Republic of Cyprus may enter or re-enter the UK without quarantine. However, as at October 2005, PETS compliant animals travelling from north Cyprus (the area north of the Buffer Zone) must be licensed into quarantine for 6 months on arrival in the UK. See the website or contact the Helpline to check for any change in this situation.

² Includes St Barthelemy and St Martin (French part of the island)

³ There are no requirements for pets travelling directly between the UK and the Republic of Ireland

(b) Non-EU listed countries and territories

Andorra	Croatia	Mayotte	St Lucia
Antigua & Barbuda	Curacao	Monaco	St Pierre & Miquelon
Argentina	Falkland Islands	Montserrat	St Vincent
Aruba	Fiji	Netherlands Antilles	Switzerland
Ascension Island	French Polynesia	New Caledonia	Taiwan
Australia	Grenadines	New Zealand	United Arab Emirates
Bahrain	Hawaii	Norway	USA (mainland)
Barbados	Hong Kong	Russian Federation	Vanuatu
Bermuda	Iceland	San Marino	Vatican
BES Islands (2)	Jamaica ¹	Sint Maarten	
Canada	Japan	Singapore	Wallis & Futuna
Cayman Islands	Liechtenstein	St Helena	
Chile	Mauritius	St Kitts & Nevis	

¹ Jamaican law as at October 2005 prevents their involvement in PETS. See the website or contact the Helpline to check for any change in this situation.

2) The BES Islands are Bonair, Saint Eustatius and Saba

Pets travelling within the British Isles

Ferrets in the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man or Republic of Ireland can travel freely between these countries without the need for any documentation. However, owners with PETS documents should be advised to take these with them in case they are asked to show them.

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