

Pet Relocation Checklist: Your 90-Day Countdown

Moving abroad with a pet is not the same as moving abroad alone. There are vaccine windows that cannot be rushed, paperwork that expires if you file it too early, and airline rules that vary by species, breed, and destination. A solid pet relocation checklist turns this maze into a series of manageable weekly tasks, so nothing gets missed at the worst possible moment.

This guide breaks the process into a 90-day countdown, from the day you decide to relocate to the moment you walk through arrivals with your pet beside you. Use it as your working pet travel checklist, or download the printable PDF timeline at the bottom of the page and stick it on the fridge.

Why a Timeline Matters More Than a To-Do List

A generic list of tasks does not tell you *when* to do them, and timing is where most pet relocations go wrong. Rabies titer tests, for example, often need to happen 3 to 6 months before travel, depending on the destination country. Health certificates, on the other hand, are usually only valid for 10 days before departure. Do things out of order and you could be stuck rebooking flights or, worse, leaving your pet behind.

That is why this moving abroad with pet checklist is organized by countdown, not by category.

The 90-Day Countdown at a Glance

Days Before Move	Focus Area	Key Actions
90 days	Research and vet visit	Confirm destination pet import rules, book vet check-up, start microchip/vaccine review
75 days	Documentation	Apply for import permit, request rabies titer test if required
60 days	Travel logistics	Book pet-friendly flight or pet shipping service, reserve an IATA-approved crate
45 days	Crate training	Begin crate acclimation, order travel supplies
30 days	Health certificate prep	Confirm vaccine boosters, schedule official health exam

14 days	Final vet exam	Get the official health certificate (usually valid 10 days)
7 days	Final checks	Confirm airline paperwork, pack travel kit, reconfirm flight
1 day	Departure prep	Light meal, exercise, final crate check, print all documents
Arrival	Settling in	Vet check at destination, update local ID tags, unpack familiar items

Keep this table close. Every section below expands on one of these stages.

90 to 75 Days Before: Lay the Groundwork

This is the research phase, and it decides how smooth everything else will be.

- **Check your destination's import rules.** Every country has its own pet entry requirements, and some (Australia, the UK, Japan, and others) have long quarantine or waiting periods baked into the rabies titer process.
- **Book a vet appointment.** Ask specifically about microchip compliance (ISO 11784/11785 standard chips are required almost everywhere), vaccine history, and whether a rabies titer test applies to your route.
- **Start a document folder.** Physical and digital copies of every vaccine record, vet invoice, and microchip certificate save enormous stress later.

Quick tip: If your destination requires a rabies titer test, the blood draw needs to happen at an approved lab, and results can take 3 to 4 weeks. Book this early or your whole timeline shifts.

75 to 60 Days Before: Get the Paperwork Moving

Once you know the rules, start applying.

1. Submit your import permit application if the destination requires one.
2. Request the rabies titer test if it has not already been scheduled.
3. Confirm passport or export certificate requirements with your home country's agriculture or animal health department.

Countries with strict entry rules can take 6 to 8 weeks just to process an import permit, so this stage cannot be skipped or shortened.

60 to 45 Days Before: Lock In Travel Logistics

This is when the move becomes real.

- **Choose your travel method.** In-cabin, checked baggage, or a professional pet shipping service, each has different weight limits, breed restrictions, and cost.
- **Book early.** Airlines cap how many pets can travel per flight, and popular routes fill up fast.
- **Buy an IATA-approved crate now.** Waiting until the last month means your pet has no time to get comfortable inside it.

Common Pet Travel Options Compared

Method	Best For	Watch Out For
In-cabin	Small dogs and cats under carrier weight limits	Strict airline size rules
Checked baggage	Mid-size pets on some airlines	Temperature restrictions during summer or winter
Cargo/pet shipping service	Large dogs, exotic pets, complex routes	Higher cost, but door-to-door support

45 to 30 Days Before: Crate Training and Supplies

A crate that feels like a punishment on day one will make the actual travel day miserable. Start now.

- Leave the crate open at home with bedding and treats inside.
- Feed meals near or inside the crate to build a positive association.
- Gradually increase the time your pet spends inside with the door closed.

While you are at it, order the essentials: a spill-proof water bowl, a favorite toy that smells like home, absorbent pads, and a printed luggage tag with your contact details and destination address.

30 Days Before: Health Certificate Prep

Most destinations require boosters or specific vaccines to be given within a set window before travel, not too early and not too late. Confirm with your vet exactly which shots count and when they expire relative to your flight date.

This is also the point to double check flea, tick, and tapeworm treatment requirements, since several countries (the UK among them) require proof of tapeworm treatment given within a strict 1 to 5 day window before arrival.

14 Days Before: The Official Health Exam

Book the appointment for your official international health certificate now. Most are only valid for 10 days from issue, so scheduling this too early means starting over.

Bring every document you have collected: vaccine records, microchip certificate, titer test results, and import permit. Your vet will need all of it to complete the certificate correctly.

7 Days Before: Final Checks

With one week left, this is where a printable pet relocation checklist earns its keep. Confirm:

- ☐ Health certificate signed and dated correctly
- ☐ Import permit copy printed
- ☐ Airline booking confirmed, including pet reservation
- ☐ Crate fitted and labeled with contact details
- ☐ Travel kit packed (food, water, medication, comfort items)
- ☐ Destination vet contact saved for emergencies

1 Day Before Departure

Keep this day calm and simple.

- Offer a light meal several hours before travel, not right before.
- Give a long walk or play session to burn off nervous energy.
- Do a final crate check for loose bedding, secure latches, and airflow.
- Print (do not just save on your phone) every document, since some border staff will not accept digital copies.

Arrival Day and the First Week

Getting through customs is not the finish line. Give your pet time to decompress.

- Book a vet visit within the first week to register locally and confirm everything is in order.
- Update ID tags and microchip records with your new address.
- Keep the first few days low-key, same food, same toys, and a quiet space to adjust.

Pets read a household's stress levels closely. A calm first week at the new home often matters more than the flight itself.

Frequently Asked Questions

How far in advance should I start my pet relocation checklist? Start at least 90 days ahead, since rabies titer tests and import permits can take weeks to process.

Do all countries require a rabies titer test? No, only certain destinations require it, and it depends on your pet's current rabies vaccination and the country's rabies status.

How long is a pet health certificate valid? Most international health certificates are valid for only 10 days before travel.

Can I bring my pet in the cabin with me? Only if your pet meets the airline's weight and carrier size limits, which vary by carrier and route.

What if my pet has never been in a crate before? Start crate training at least 45 days before travel so the crate feels familiar rather than frightening.

Do I need a microchip for international travel? Yes, an ISO 11784/11785 compliant microchip is required by nearly every country for pet entry.

Is quarantine still required after arrival? Some countries still require quarantine, though many now waive it if all pre-travel testing and paperwork are completed correctly.

Download Your Printable Timeline

Want this entire moving abroad with pet checklist in one place? Grab the printable 1 to 2 page PDF timeline, pin it somewhere visible, and check off each milestone as you go. It covers every stage above in a simple day-by-day countdown format built for the fridge, the office board, or your travel folder.

[Download the Pet Relocation Checklist PDF]