

The Ultimate International Pet Relocation Guide

Everything you need to move a dog, cat, rabbit, or small pet across borders safely, legally, and without a last-minute panic.

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1. Your Complete Roadmap to Moving a Pet Across Borders

Moving abroad is stressful enough before you add a living, breathing family member to the equation. A job posting in Dubai, a partner's relocation to Sydney, a return home to Toronto after years in London. The human logistics are hard. The pet logistics are where most families lose sleep.

This is the single resource we built to remove that fear. It pulls together the full international pet relocation process into one place, so you are not stitching together forum threads, out-of-date blog posts, and conflicting airline pages at midnight while your departure date creeps closer.

Here is the truth most owners learn too late. **Relocating a pet internationally is not one task. It is a sequence of dated, country-specific requirements, and missing a single deadline can strand your pet for months.**

Read this first: The most common reason a pet relocation fails is not cost or distance. It is timing. A rabies blood test taken one day too early, a vaccination given before the microchip, a health certificate signed outside its validity window. Every step in this guide is built around getting the order and the dates right.

This guide is written for:

- **Expats and their families** moving for work or lifestyle
- **Military and diplomatic households** facing fixed posting dates
- **Remote workers and digital nomads** setting up in a new country
- **Returning nationals** bringing a pet back after years abroad
- **Anyone** who has been quoted a frightening number by a relocation company and wants to understand what they are actually paying for

By the end, you will know the timeline, the paperwork, the transport options, the realistic costs in pounds, and the exact points where a professional pet relocation specialist saves you money and heartache rather than adding to the bill.

We move pets for a living at Pets Lets Travel, so parts of this guide reflect what actually happens on the ground, not just what the rulebooks say. Where a step is genuinely worth handing to an expert, we say so plainly. Where you can handle it yourself with a good local vet, we say that too.

The Three Forces That Shape Every Move

No matter where you are going, three forces decide how your relocation plays out.

The destination's rules. Every country sets its own conditions, and they range from a light-touch document check to a permit, a blood test, and months of waiting. The destination, not your own convenience, sets the pace.

Your pet's profile. Species, breed, size, and age all change the picture. A young medium-sized cat is one kind of move. A senior snub-nosed dog is another entirely.

Your timeline. The gap between today and your travel date is the resource you can least afford to waste. Time bought early is cheap. Time bought late, through express testing or rebooked flights, is expensive and sometimes impossible.

Hold those three forces in mind as you read. Almost every decision in this guide is a trade between them.

A Note on Accuracy and Change

Pet import rules move. Governments update conditions, add or remove countries from approved lists, and change waiting periods. Treat this guide as your map and your official destination portal as the live traffic report. We tell you what to check and where the risks sit, then you confirm the current detail before you act.

Let us begin with the one thing that governs everything else. The clock.

2. The Relocation Timeline, Mapped Month by Month

The pet relocation process is best understood backwards, working from your arrival date to today. Book flights and paperwork against the destination's rules, not against your moving-house schedule, because the two rarely line up.

Below is a working timeline for a straightforward move between two rabies-controlled countries. **Rabies-free destinations such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan run on much longer clocks, sometimes six to seven months, and we flag those separately in Section 4.**

The Countdown at a Glance

Time before travel	Priority actions	Miss this and...
6+ months	Confirm destination import rules. Microchip the pet. Administer rabies vaccination <i>after</i> the chip	The whole process resets to zero
4 to 5 months	Rabies titre (blood) test where required. Research approved routes and airlines	Titre waiting periods push your date back by months
2 to 3 months	Book flights and any quarantine slots. Order the correct IATA crate	Cargo space and quarantine places sell out
4 to 6 weeks	Begin crate acclimation. Book the pre-export vet appointment	A stressed, crate-unfamiliar animal at check-in
1 to 2 weeks	Health certificate issued and government endorsed. Parasite treatments in their timing windows	Certificates expire fast, often within 10 days
Travel day	Feed lightly, walk, hydrate, arrive early for live-animal check-in	Rushed handovers cause errors and refusals
On arrival	Customs and import inspection, collection or agent handover	Detained pets accrue daily holding fees

The Logic Behind the Sequence

Three rules explain why the order is so rigid.

The microchip must come first. A rabies vaccination only counts if the animal was already microchipped when it was given. Vaccinate before you chip and most authorities treat the animal as unvaccinated. You would have to start again.

The rabies vaccination must mature. Countries impose a waiting period between the shot (or the follow-up blood test) and the day the pet may enter. This is where months disappear.

The health paperwork must be fresh. The final veterinary health certificate has a short life. It is issued close to departure, endorsed by a government vet, and treated as invalid if you travel outside its window.

Highlighted takeaway: If you remember nothing else, remember this order.

Chip, then vaccinate, then blood test, then wait, then travel. Everything in this guide hangs off that spine.

Phase Notes: What Actually Happens in Each Window

Six months out is your planning fortress. With half a year in hand, almost every route is open to you. You have room for a titre test, a re-test if the first result is borderline, and a choice of airlines and dates. This is the position every relocation specialist wants a client to start from.

Four to five months out is where the clinical steps stack. Vaccination, then the blood draw at the correct interval, then the wait for the laboratory result. Nothing here can be rushed. The laboratory works to its own schedule, and the biology does not care about your moving date.

Two to three months out is the booking window. Pet-approved flight space is limited, and quarantine places at government facilities are limited further still. Popular routes and peak seasons sell out. Booking now protects your date.

The final month is preparation, not paperwork panic. Crate acclimation, the pre-export vet visit, and the tight-window treatments happen here. If your earlier steps were done correctly, this month is calm. If they were not, this is where the problems surface, often too late to fix.

Travel week is about the animal, not the admin. By now the documents should be in order. Your focus turns to keeping your pet calm, fed lightly, walked, hydrated, and comfortable in a crate it already knows.

Start Early, Because Late Has No Remedy

Six months is comfortable for most routes. Three months is tight. Under six weeks to a strict destination is often impossible, and no reputable specialist will pretend otherwise. The single kindest thing you can do for your pet is to begin the process the moment the move becomes likely, not the moment it becomes certain.

3. Pre-Departure Non-Negotiables Every Owner Must Clear

These are the clinical and administrative steps almost every destination requires in some form. Think of them as the foundation. Get them wrong and nothing built on top will hold.

The Microchip That Ties It All Together

Your pet needs a microchip that meets the **ISO 11784/11785 standard**. This is the internationally readable 15-digit format. Chips outside this standard may not be scannable at the border, and an unscannable chip can mean a rejected pet.

Key points:

- Have the chip implanted and scanned **before** any rabies vaccination
- Record the chip number on every document that follows
- If your pet was chipped years ago, ask your vet to confirm it is ISO compliant and still readable
- Carry a **compatible scanner note** for older chips, because some countries expect you to provide one

Costly mistake to avoid: A pet vaccinated against rabies *before* being microchipped will usually have that vaccination declared invalid. The fix is a fresh chip, a fresh vaccination, and often a fresh waiting period. Weeks or months lost.

Rabies Vaccination, Timed to the Rulebook

After the microchip, the rabies vaccination is the single most important clinical step in the entire pet relocation process.

- It must be given after the chip, by a qualified vet, and logged with batch and date
- Most destinations require the animal to be a minimum age, commonly 12 weeks, before vaccination
- A waiting period, often 21 days, applies before the animal is considered protected
- Booster timing matters. A lapsed booster can reset the clock

The Rabies Titre Test That Trips People Up

Many rabies-free and rabies-controlled destinations demand a **rabies antibody titre test**, also called an RNATT or FAVN test. This is a blood sample sent to an approved laboratory to confirm the vaccination worked.

Here is why it catches owners out:

- The blood cannot be drawn until a set number of days after vaccination
- Once you have a passing result (commonly a reading of at least 0.5 IU/ml), a further waiting period often applies before travel is permitted
- For some countries that wait is three months. For others it is longer

Worked sequence for a titre-required destination:

1. Microchip implanted
2. Rabies vaccination given (day 0)
3. Blood drawn no earlier than the required interval after vaccination
4. Passing titre result received
5. Mandatory wait (often 3 months) from the blood draw date
6. Earliest permitted travel date

Highlighted takeaway: The titre test is where DIY relocations most often fall apart. The maths is unforgiving and the labs are specific. If your destination requires it, treat this as the fixed point your whole calendar bends around.

Parasite and Tapeworm Treatment

Several countries require documented parasite control shortly before entry.

- **Tapeworm (Echinococcus) treatment** is mandatory for entry into the UK, Ireland, Finland, Malta, and Norway, and must be administered by a vet within a set window before arrival, commonly 24 to 120 hours
- Tick and worm treatments may be required for other destinations
- Every treatment must be recorded, dated, and signed by the vet

The Veterinary Health Certificate

Close to departure, an official vet examines your pet and issues a health certificate confirming it is fit to travel and meets the destination's conditions.

- In the UK this is issued by an Official Veterinarian and endorsed by the **Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)**
- In the US, endorsement runs through **USDA APHIS**
- The certificate has a short validity, often 10 days, so it is one of the last steps, not one of the first

The Documentation That Travels With Your Pet

Paperwork is where careful owners still get caught, because a border officer works from the documents in front of them, not from your good intentions.

The core document set usually includes:

- **Proof of microchip** with the 15-digit number
- **Rabies vaccination record** showing it was given after the chip
- **Rabies titre certificate** where the destination requires it
- **Parasite and tapeworm treatment records** within their windows
- **The veterinary health certificate**, government endorsed
- **An import permit or licence** for permit-based destinations
- **A pet passport** for pets resident in a scheme that issues one

Three habits keep this section clean:

Match every number. The microchip number must read identically across every document. A single transposed digit can hold a pet at the border.

Watch every date format. Countries write dates differently, and an ambiguous date on a certificate causes real delays. Confirm the format your destination expects.

Keep originals and copies. Travel with the originals, carry copies, and keep digital scans accessible. If a document goes missing in transit, copies keep you moving.

Costly mistake to avoid: Assuming a document that satisfied one country will satisfy the next. Each destination has its own required wording, endorsements, and timing. A certificate perfect for the EU may be incomplete for Australia.

Your Pre-Departure Checklist

- ☐ ISO 11784/11785 microchip implanted and scanned
 - ☐ Rabies vaccination given after the chip, correctly dated
 - ☐ Rabies titre test passed (if destination requires it)
 - ☐ Mandatory post-test waiting period observed
 - ☐ Tapeworm and parasite treatments within their windows
 - ☐ Health certificate issued and government endorsed
 - ☐ All documents match the microchip number exactly
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4. Destination Rules Decoded by Country Type

Every country writes its own rulebook, and there are close to two hundred of them. Rather than list each one, it helps to group destinations by their approach to rabies risk. That tells you almost everything about how hard the move will be.

Important: The groupings below are for orientation only. They are not a substitute for the official government portal of your destination, which is the single authoritative source. Always confirm current rules before you book anything, because they change without much notice.

Group One: Rabies-Free and Strictly Guarded

Countries and territories that have eliminated rabies protect that status fiercely. Expect the longest timelines, titre testing, import permits, and often quarantine.

Typical members: **Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, Hawaii, and parts of the UK's own historical approach.**

What to expect:

- An **import permit** applied for in advance
- A passing rabies titre test with a long waiting period built in

- Entry only from approved countries, or a longer route via an approved country first
- **Mandatory quarantine** on arrival, sometimes ten days, sometimes far longer

Destination	Headline requirement	Typical lead time
Australia	Import permit, titre test, post-entry quarantine (min 10 days)	6 to 7 months
New Zealand	Import permit, titre test, quarantine	6+ months
Japan	Titre test plus 180-day wait, or quarantine on arrival	7+ months
Singapore	Import licence, titre test, possible quarantine	4 to 6 months

A closer look at the strictest routes. Moves into Australia and New Zealand are the most demanding a pet owner is likely to face, and they reward early, precise planning.

- The process runs on a **fixed sequence** of vaccination, titre test, and a long validity window before travel
- Pets often must enter from an **approved country**, so a pet in a non-approved country may need to relocate via an approved one first, adding months
- A **government import permit** must be secured before booking
- **Post-entry quarantine** is mandatory even for perfectly prepared animals

These routes are where a specialist earns their fee several times over. The margin for error is close to zero, and a single misstep can push the move back by an entire testing cycle.

Group Two: The European Scheme

Travel within the EU, and into it from many countries, runs on a well-established pet movement scheme built around the microchip, rabies vaccination, and an official document.

- EU-resident pets use an **EU Pet Passport**
- Pets entering from outside use an **Animal Health Certificate** issued close to travel
- Rabies vaccination is central, and titre testing applies to pets arriving from certain higher-risk countries
- Some destinations add tapeworm treatment on entry

Group Three: The United Kingdom After Brexit

Great Britain no longer issues EU Pet Passports. The route now runs on the **Animal Health Certificate (AHC)** for onward EU travel, and a defined set of entry rules under **DEFRA and APHA** for pets arriving into the UK.

- Microchip, valid rabies vaccination, and approved documentation are required
- Tapeworm treatment is mandatory for dogs entering the UK within the set window
- Entry must be via an approved route and carrier

Group Four: The United States

The US updated its rules significantly, and dogs now face a distinct set of requirements from other species.

- Dogs must meet **CDC** entry conditions, including microchip, minimum age, and the required import form
- Other species fall under **USDA APHIS** oversight
- Rules differ depending on whether the pet was in a high-risk rabies country

Group Five: The Middle East and the Gulf

Popular relocation destinations such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar run permit-based systems with their own import approvals.

- An **import permit** is usually required in advance
- Vaccination and titre requirements apply, and rules differ by species
- **Breed restrictions** are common, and some breeds are refused
- Approved airline and airport routing matters, so confirm the entry point

Group Six: Canada and Nearer Neighbours

Some destinations sit at the lighter-touch end for cats and dogs from low-risk countries, but this never means no rules.

- **Canada** applies rabies vaccination requirements that vary by the pet's origin country and age
- Documentation still needs to be correct and current
- Lighter rules for one species do not extend to all species

Reading a Country Portal Without Getting Lost

Official portals are dense. A quick method to find what matters:

1. Search the destination's **government agriculture or agency site**, not a third-party blog
2. Look for the page specific to **your pet's species and your origin country**
3. Note the **exact sequence and waiting periods**, then work backwards from your date
4. Confirm your **breed is permitted** and whether a **permit** is needed
5. Check the **approved entry points** and any **transit country** rules

Highlighted takeaway: The country grouping tells you how hard the move will be. The official portal tells you exactly how to do it. Use the first to plan, the second to execute, and never rely on a general article for the final detail.

Breed and Species Bans You Cannot Ignore

Some destinations refuse specific breeds outright, regardless of paperwork.

- **Restricted or banned dog breeds** commonly include certain bull-type and guarding breeds. The exact list varies by country
- Some destinations restrict or refuse particular small mammals, reptiles, and birds
- A permitted breed in one country can be a prohibited one next door

Highlighted takeaway: Confirm your specific breed is allowed at the destination before you spend a penny on vaccinations or flights. A banned breed is a hard stop no specialist can work around.

5. Self-Managing Against Hiring a Relocation Specialist

You do not always need a pet relocation agent. For some moves, a capable owner and a good local vet can handle everything. For others, going it alone is a false economy that risks your pet and your budget. Here is an honest framework for deciding.

A Do-It-Yourself Move Realistically Involves

- Reading and correctly interpreting the destination's official import rules
- Sequencing the microchip, vaccination, titre test, and treatments to the day
- Booking pet-approved flights, which is harder than booking your own seat
- Sourcing and sizing an IATA-compliant crate
- Arranging government endorsement of paperwork within tight windows
- Managing customs clearance and collection at the other end
- Solving problems in a foreign time zone, sometimes in a foreign language

Where Owners Most Often Come Unstuck

Owners who take on a complex move alone rarely fail through lack of care. They fail because the process hides its difficulty until it is too late to recover. The rules read as simple on a first pass, then reveal their traps at the border. These are the points where that happens.

Missed titre windows. The single most frequent failure. The maths is easy to get wrong and expensive to redo.

Non-compliant paperwork. A date in the wrong format, a mismatched chip number, a certificate signed outside its window. Borders are unforgiving.

Rejected crates. An airline refuses a crate at check-in for a ventilation or sizing issue, and there is no time to source another.

Route problems. A transit country has its own rules, and a pet moving through it needs to satisfy them too.

Routes Where a Specialist Pays for Itself

Consider engaging a pet relocation company when your move involves any of the following:

- **Multi-leg journeys** with transits through third countries
- **Quarantine destinations** such as Australia, New Zealand, or Japan
- **Snub-nosed breeds** that face airline restrictions and need careful routing
- **Tight timelines** where there is no room for a mistake
- **Multiple pets** travelling together
- **Complex species** such as rabbits, birds, or reptiles with country-specific rules

The Decision at a Glance

Your situation	Reasonable DIY	Specialist recommended
Simple move between two EU countries	Yes	Optional
Move to a rabies-free quarantine country	Risky	Strongly advised
Snub-nosed breed on a long-haul route	Risky	Strongly advised
Multi-leg journey with transits	Risky	Strongly advised
Departure date under 8 weeks away	Often impossible alone	Advised where feasible
Rabbit, bird, reptile, or exotic	Difficult	Advised

Where we fit in: At Pets Lets Travel we take on the routes that keep owners awake. Quarantine countries, brachycephalic breeds, tight postings, and multi-leg journeys are our daily work. If your move is simple, we will tell you honestly that you may not need us. If it is complex, we remove the risk of a single missed date undoing months of preparation.

The Relocation Mistakes That Cost Owners Most

Even careful owners repeat the same handful of errors. Knowing them in advance is half the defence.

Starting the process too late. The most expensive mistake of all, because time cannot be bought back. A late start narrows your route options and can force impossible timelines.

Vaccinating before microchipping. Covered earlier, and worth repeating, because it is common and it resets the whole clock.

Misreading the titre waiting period. Owners see a passing result and assume they can travel. The waiting period that follows is where the real delay lives.

Choosing flights before checking the pet's route. People book their own convenient itinerary, then find the animal cannot follow it. Book the pet first.

Buying the wrong crate. A crate that is too small, poorly ventilated, or bought too late to acclimate the animal causes stress and check-in refusals.

Ignoring transit country rules. A pet passing through a third country may need to satisfy that country's rules too, and a missed transit condition can halt the journey.

Trusting outdated information. Rules change. A friend's successful move two years ago is not a current rulebook.

Highlighted takeaway: Almost every failed relocation traces back to one of these seven mistakes. Read them, plan against them, and you have already avoided the most common ways a move goes wrong.

6. Air Travel Explained: Cabin, Cargo, and Manifest Options

For most international moves, your pet will fly. There are three ways that happens, and the right one depends on the animal's size, breed, the airline, and the route.

The Three Ways a Pet Flies

In-cabin. Small pets that fit inside an airline-approved carrier under the seat may travel in the cabin with you. Strict weight limits apply, usually well under 8kg including the carrier, and long-haul carriers often do not allow it at all.

The appeal of in-cabin travel is obvious, since your pet stays with you the whole way. The catches are real:

- The **combined weight** of pet and carrier must sit under a low limit
- The **carrier must fit under the seat**, so soft-sided, compact carriers are the norm
- Airlines cap the **number of animals per cabin**, so space books up fast
- Many long-haul and international routes **do not offer it at all**
- Some destinations with strict import rules **will not clear a cabin-arrived pet** through the passenger channel, requiring cargo instead

Checked baggage (accompanied). The pet travels in the hold on the same flight as you, in an approved crate. Fewer airlines offer this than they used to.

Manifest cargo. The pet travels as air cargo, handled by a specialist team, in a temperature-controlled and pressurised hold. This is the standard route for larger animals and long-haul relocations, and it is safer than the word "cargo" suggests.

Option	Best for	Key limits
In-cabin	Small cats and small dogs	Tight weight and carrier size limits, rarely long-haul
Checked baggage	Medium pets with owner on same flight	Offered by fewer airlines each year
Manifest cargo	Larger pets and long-haul moves	Booked through cargo teams or an agent, not the passenger desk

The Hold Is Not the Cabin's Poor Cousin

Owners often fear the hold. In reality, the section of the hold used for live animals is **pressurised and temperature-controlled to the same standard as the cabin**. It is dark, which keeps most animals calm, and it is a routine, well-managed part of what airlines do.

Temperature Embargoes Are Real

Airlines apply **temperature embargoes** to protect animals. If it is too hot or too cold at departure, transit, or arrival, the pet cannot fly. Summer moves to hot climates and winter moves to cold ones need careful timing, and this is a common reason a booking gets bumped.

The Snub-Nosed Restriction You Must Plan Around

Brachycephalic (snub-nosed) breeds such as Bulldogs, Pugs, Persians, and their relatives are at higher risk of breathing difficulty under travel stress. Many airlines refuse to carry them in the hold at all, and some refuse them entirely.

If you own one of these breeds:

- Confirm which airlines will carry the breed before you plan anything else
- Expect fewer route options and possibly a longer journey
- Consider a specialist who knows the brachycephalic-friendly carriers

Comparing Pet-Friendly Carriers

Not all airlines treat pets equally. When you compare carriers, weigh:

- Whether they carry your species, breed, and size
- Cabin, checked, and cargo options on your route
- Their live-animal handling reputation
- Temperature embargo policies
- Transit and connection handling

Highlighted takeaway: Book the pet's journey first, then book yours around it. The animal has fewer route options than you do, and forcing its journey to match your itinerary is how people end up with impossible connections.

Connections, Layovers, and Direct Flights

Every connection adds a handover, and every handover adds risk.

- A **direct flight** is almost always kinder to the animal, even if it costs more or leaves at an awkward hour
- Where a connection is unavoidable, a **longer, calmer layover** with proper animal handling beats a rushed one
- Some transit airports have dedicated **animal care facilities**, and routing through them is worth paying for on long journeys

How Airlines Handle Live Animals

Reputable carriers treat animal cargo as a specialist service, not ordinary freight.

- Animals are usually **loaded last and unloaded first** to limit time on the tarmac
- The live-animal hold is **climate controlled and pressurised**
- Ground staff monitor temperature-sensitive loading in extreme weather
- Handlers check crates and paperwork at multiple points

Feeding, Water, and Comfort on Travel Day

- Offer a **light meal several hours before** departure, not immediately before
- Keep **water available** until close to check-in, and attach a spill-resistant water dish to the crate
- Add **absorbent bedding** and a familiar, unwashed item carrying your scent
- Exercise the animal beforehand so it travels calmer and more likely to rest

Costly mistake to avoid: A heavy meal right before travel. A full stomach in a moving hold causes discomfort and mess. Feed light and early, and let the animal settle.

7. Choosing an IATA-Compliant Travel Crate

The crate is not just a box. It is a regulated piece of travel equipment, and an airline will refuse a pet at check-in if the crate does not meet the **IATA Live Animals Regulations**. Get this right early.

Sizing Your Crate Correctly

The animal must be able to **stand fully, turn around, and lie down naturally** inside the crate. Too small is unsafe and non-compliant. Too large is also a problem, because the animal can be thrown around in turbulence.

A simple sizing method:

- **Length:** nose to base of tail, plus half the leg length
- **Height:** floor to top of head or ear tips when standing
- **Width:** roughly twice the shoulder width for two animals sharing, single width plus room to turn for one

The Features an Airline Checks

- **Rigid construction**, usually hard plastic with a metal-barred door
- **Ventilation on at least three sides**, four for many international routes
- A **spring-locked or bolted door**, not a simple clip
- **No wheels**, or wheels removed or taped so the crate cannot roll
- **Water and food dishes** accessible from outside without opening the door
- **Absorbent bedding** on the floor
- **"Live Animal" labelling** and directional arrows
- A pouch or holder for the travel documents attached to the top

The Acclimation Schedule That Reduces Stress

A crate the animal has never seen is a frightening place. Introduce it weeks ahead.

Four to six weeks out:

- Place the open crate in a normal room with bedding and a familiar toy
- Feed meals near it, then inside it
- Let the animal choose to enter, never force it

Two to three weeks out:

- Encourage longer voluntary stays with the door open
- Begin closing the door briefly, then longer

Final week:

- Short car trips in the crate to link it with movement
- The crate should feel like a den, not a trap, by travel day

Costly mistake to avoid: Buying the crate the week before you fly. If the airline rejects it for sizing or ventilation, you have no time to replace it and no time for the animal to settle. Order early, check the airline's exact spec, and start acclimation the moment it arrives.

Preparing Your Pet's Mind, Not Just the Paperwork

The clinical steps protect your pet's legal passage. The behavioural steps protect its wellbeing. Both matter.

Keep routine steady as the house changes. Packing boxes and empty rooms unsettle animals. Hold feeding, walking, and sleeping times constant for as long as you can.

Introduce travel sounds gently. For anxious animals, short, quiet exposure to the sounds of movement and activity in the weeks before travel takes the edge off the real thing.

Use scent as reassurance. An unwashed blanket or a worn t-shirt carrying your smell is one of the most calming things you can pack. It tells the animal that home travelled with it.

Stay calm yourself. Pets read their owners closely. A relaxed handover at check-in does more for the animal than any amount of fussing. Your steadiness becomes its steadiness.

Highlighted takeaway: A pet that knows its crate, keeps its routine, and carries the scent of home travels far better than one thrown into an unfamiliar box on the day. Preparation of the mind is as important as preparation of the paperwork.

8. Species by Species: Dogs, Cats, Rabbits, and Small Pets

Different animals travel differently. The rabies framework covers dogs and cats in most countries, but each species has its own stresses, rules, and quirks. Here is the practical detail for the pets we move most.

Dogs on the Move

Dogs are the most commonly relocated pet and the most catered for by airlines, but they also face the most breed-based rules.

- **Breed restrictions** apply widely, both bans on certain guarding and bull-type breeds and hold refusals for snub-nosed breeds
- Larger dogs almost always travel as manifest cargo
- Familiar bedding and a worn, unwashed item carrying your scent helps them settle
- Exercise before travel, then a light meal several hours ahead, reduces anxiety and accidents

Cats in Transit

Cats are small enough that in-cabin travel is sometimes possible, but they are also more prone to hiding stress.

- Persians and other flat-faced cats fall under the same **brachycephalic caution** as snub-nosed dogs

- Cats value enclosure. A covered, den-like carrier calms them
- Withhold food for a few hours before travel, keep water available until close to departure
- Never open the carrier in a public airport area, because a frightened cat that bolts is very hard to recover

Rabbits and Their Special Requirements

Rabbits are more delicate travellers than many owners expect, and their import rules are far more variable.

- Some countries permit rabbit import with straightforward paperwork, others restrict or refuse it
- Rabbits are highly sensitive to heat, so temperature timing is critical
- They need constant access to water and their usual hay to avoid gut problems
- Handling stress can be dangerous, so calm, quiet movement matters more than with a dog or cat

Small Pets, Birds, and Exotics

Smaller mammals, birds, and reptiles are the hardest category, because rules swing wildly by country and species.

- Many destinations require **species-specific permits** for birds and exotics
- Some ban particular species outright, often to protect native wildlife
- Temperature and ventilation tolerances are narrow
- Documentation is often more complex than for cats and dogs, not less

Species	Cabin possible	Main challenge
Dogs	Only if very small	Breed bans and snub-nosed rules
Cats	Sometimes	Stress and flat-faced breed caution
Rabbits	Rarely	Variable import rules, heat sensitivity
Birds	Rarely	Permits and species bans
Reptiles and exotics	Rarely	Complex, country-specific rules

Highlighted takeaway: Some destinations will not accept certain species at all, no matter how good your paperwork. Confirm your specific animal is permitted at the destination before you commit to the move.

A Word on Sedation

Owners often assume a sedative will make the journey kinder. Most vets advise strongly against sedating pets for air travel.

- At altitude, sedation can affect breathing and heart rate unpredictably
- A sedated animal cannot balance or brace itself during turbulence
- Many airlines refuse visibly sedated animals

Calm through familiarity, a well-acclimated crate, and correct timing does more for your pet than any drug.

Moving Several Pets at Once

Relocating more than one animal multiplies the moving parts rather than simply adding to them.

- Each animal needs its **own compliant paperwork**, timed correctly
- Some airlines allow **two compatible animals to share a crate** within size limits, but many require separate crates
- Bonded pets often travel calmer near each other, so ask about **adjacent loading**
- Costs scale per animal, so budget accordingly

Senior Pets and Pets With Health Conditions

Older animals and those with existing conditions can usually still travel, but they need extra care.

- A **vet fitness assessment** for travel is essential, and airlines may require sign-off
- Medication schedules must be planned around the journey and any time-zone shift
- A senior pet benefits even more from a familiar, well-acclimated crate
- For frail animals, a specialist route with fewer connections is worth the extra cost

Puppies and Kittens

Very young animals face age minimums that often make an immediate move impossible.

- Rabies vaccination usually cannot happen before a **minimum age**, commonly 12 weeks
- Destinations frequently set a **minimum entry age** on top of that
- The waiting periods that follow mean a young animal's move is often months away by design

Highlighted takeaway: Age is a hard gate. A puppy or kitten too young to be vaccinated cannot start the clock, so plan the move around the animal's birthday, not just your own calendar.

9. Quarantine Countries and the Preparation They Demand

Quarantine is the word that frightens owners most. In practice, a clean, correctly prepared pet often faces the minimum stay, and understanding the process ahead of time removes most of the anxiety.

Destinations That Require Quarantine

Rabies-free countries protect their status with mandatory quarantine on arrival.

- **Australia** requires post-entry quarantine, with a minimum stay commonly around ten days at an approved government facility
- **New Zealand** applies quarantine for many arrivals
- **Japan** may require quarantine of up to 180 days if the titre and waiting-period conditions are not fully met before travel
- **Singapore, Hawaii, and others** have their own quarantine regimes

How Preparation Shortens the Stay

The length of quarantine often depends on how well the pet was prepared before travel.

- A **passing titre test** and a fully observed waiting period can reduce or, in some cases, remove additional quarantine
- Incomplete preparation is the reason a stay stretches from days into months
- The paperwork you complete months earlier directly controls the time your pet spends in a facility

Booking Quarantine in Advance

Approved quarantine facilities have limited places and fill up.

- Reserve a place as early as your import permit allows
- Book it in step with your flights, not after
- Confirm the facility is government approved for your destination

Preparing Your Pet for the Stay

- Send familiar bedding and a scented item where the facility permits it
- Note dietary needs clearly, since a sudden food change adds stress
- Understand the visiting rules, which vary and are sometimes limited

Highlighted takeaway: Quarantine is rarely the disaster owners fear when preparation is right. The stay is driven by your earlier choices. Do the titre test properly, observe every waiting period, and you give your pet the shortest possible time in the facility.

Life Inside a Quarantine Facility

Government-approved facilities are built for animal welfare, not punishment, and knowing what happens there settles most nerves.

- Animals are housed in **climate-appropriate individual units** with exercise areas
- Trained staff handle **daily feeding, cleaning, and health checks**
- A vet monitors each animal throughout the stay
- Facilities keep detailed **health records** you can request

The Costs Quarantine Adds

Quarantine is one of the larger line items on a strict-destination move, and it is billed on top of flights and paperwork.

- Expect a **daily or per-stay facility fee**, often running into the thousands of pounds
- **Transfer from the airport** to the facility may be a separate charge
- Some facilities charge for **extras** such as grooming or additional exercise
- Book early, because a late booking can mean no place and a delayed move

Reducing the Strain of the Stay

- Provide **familiar bedding and a scented item** where permitted
- Supply **clear dietary instructions** to avoid a sudden food change
- Understand the **visiting policy** in advance, since it varies and is sometimes limited
- Trust the process, because a calm handover reads to the animal as safety

10. Budgeting the Move: Realistic Cost Ranges in Pounds

Pet relocation costs vary enormously by route, species, and destination. A short EU move and a long-haul relocation to a quarantine country are not the same financial event. Below are honest banded ranges, not false precision, so you can plan.

Line-by-Line Cost Ranges

Cost item	Typical range (£)	Notes
Microchipping	£15 to £40	One-off, if not already chipped
Rabies vaccination	£40 to £80	Plus boosters where needed
Rabies titre (blood) test	£100 to £250	Lab and vet fees combined
Parasite and tapeworm treatment	£20 to £60	Per required treatment
Health certificate and endorsement	£100 to £300	Vet plus government endorsement

IATA travel crate	£40 to £250	Larger crates cost more
Flights	£300 to £3,000+	Route, size, and cargo class dependent
Quarantine (where required)	£1,000 to £3,000+	Facility and length dependent
Customs clearance	£100 to £500	Destination dependent
Relocation agent fees	£500 to £3,000+	Scope and complexity dependent

Realistic Total Bands

- **Simple EU-to-EU move, small pet, DIY:** roughly **£500 to £1,500**
- **Mid-range long-haul move, medium pet, some support:** roughly **£2,000 to £5,000**
- **Quarantine destination, larger or snub-nosed pet, full agent support:** roughly **£4,000 to £10,000+**

Where the money is well spent: The cheapest part of the process is doing it right the first time. A failed titre window or a rejected crate does not just cost the redo. It can cost rebooked flights, extra quarantine days, and holding fees. Paying for expertise on a complex route is often cheaper than paying for the mistakes.

Hidden Costs to Plan For

- **Temperature embargo delays** that force rebooking
- **Holding fees** if a pet is detained at the border over paperwork
- **Extra quarantine days** where preparation fell short
- **Currency and endorsement fees** on international paperwork

Build a contingency of ten to fifteen percent into your budget. Something almost always shifts, and a buffer keeps a small surprise from becoming a crisis.

The Order Costs Fall In

Money leaves your account across the whole timeline, not in one lump.

- **Early:** microchip, vaccination, titre test. Modest and spread out
- **Middle:** crate, flight deposits, permit fees, quarantine reservation. The larger commitments
- **Late:** health certificate, endorsement, final treatments, clearance. Smaller but time-critical

Knowing this rhythm helps you plan cash flow rather than facing one alarming invoice.

Reading a Relocation Quote Properly

When you compare agent quotes, look past the headline number.

- Confirm **what is included**, from paperwork management to airline booking to arrival clearance
- Check whether **flights, quarantine, and customs fees** sit inside the quote or outside it
- Ask what happens, and what it costs, **if a date slips** for reasons outside your control
- A slightly higher quote that covers the awkward parts is often the cheaper choice in the end

Highlighted takeaway: The lowest quote is not always the cheapest move. A quote that leaves out clearance, quarantine, or rebooking can end up costing far more than a fuller one. Compare scope, not just price.

11. Arrival, Customs Clearance, and Settling In

The journey does not end when the plane lands. Getting your pet through customs and settled into a new home is the final stretch, and a little preparation makes it smooth.

Clearing Customs and Import Inspection

On arrival, your pet goes through an import process that varies by country.

- **Documents are checked** against the microchip, so every number must match
- An **import inspection** may confirm the animal's health and identity
- Where a permit was required, it is verified here
- Any **duties or clearance fees** are settled

Collection or Agent Handover

- On a self-managed move, you or a nominated person collects the pet from the designated point
- With an agent, a local handler manages clearance and either delivers the pet or hands it over at an agreed location
- For a quarantine destination, the pet transfers to the facility, and you collect it at the end of the stay

Helping Your Pet Settle In

Your pet has crossed time zones, climates, and a lot of noise. Give it room to reset.

The first days:

- Set up a quiet space with familiar bedding, bowls, and toys straight away
- Keep to old feeding times where you can, even in a new time zone
- Let the animal approach the new space at its own pace

- Keep early outings short and calm

The first weeks:

- Watch appetite, toileting, and energy, and see a local vet if anything seems off
- Register with a vet in the new country early
- Rebuild routine steadily, because routine is what tells an animal it is safe

Climate adjustment:

- A pet moving to a hotter country needs shade, water, and cooler exercise hours
- A pet moving to a colder one may need warmth and, for some breeds, protection outdoors

Highlighted takeaway: Most pets adjust within a few weeks when their routine, food, and familiar items travel with them. The scent of home does more than any new toy. Bring the old bedding, unwashed, and let it do its quiet work.

The First 48 Hours in the New Home

The first two days set the tone. Keep them small.

- Give the animal **one quiet room** to start, rather than the run of a strange house
- Place familiar **bedding, bowls, and toys** where it can find them
- Keep visitors and noise **to a minimum** while it decompresses
- Watch for eating and drinking, since a pet that eats and drinks is a pet that is settling

Reading the Signs of Adjustment

Some unsettled behaviour is normal after a long journey. Know what is ordinary and what needs a vet.

- **Ordinary:** quietness, extra sleep, a smaller appetite for a day or two, cautious exploration
- **Worth a vet visit:** refusal to eat or drink for a prolonged period, lethargy, digestive upset, or breathing difficulty
- Register with a **local vet early**, so you are not searching for one in a crisis

Building a New Routine

Routine is the language that tells an animal it is safe.

- Rebuild **feeding and walking times** steadily, adjusting gradually to the new time zone
- Reintroduce **normal activity** in small increments
- Give **positive, low-pressure experiences** of the new environment
- Be patient, because a few weeks of consistency does more than any single grand gesture

You started this guide worried about a single living family member and a lot of moving parts. Done in the right order, with the right preparation, an international pet relocation is not a gamble. It is a sequence you can plan and control.

The Complete Move, on a Single Page

If you take one summary away, take this. It is the whole process in the order it must happen.

Months five and six:

- ☐ Confirm the destination's official rules for your species and breed
- ☐ Check your breed is permitted and whether a permit is needed
- ☐ Microchip the pet with an ISO-standard chip
- ☐ Give the rabies vaccination after the chip

Months three and four:

- ☐ Complete the rabies titre test where required
- ☐ Observe the mandatory waiting period from the test
- ☐ Research airlines and approved routes for your pet's profile
- ☐ Apply for any import permit or licence

Months two and three:

- ☐ Book flights and any quarantine place
- ☐ Order the correct IATA crate and begin acclimation
- ☐ Confirm transit country rules if your route has connections

The final weeks:

- ☐ Book the pre-export vet appointment
- ☐ Complete parasite and tapeworm treatments in their windows
- ☐ Obtain the health certificate and government endorsement
- ☐ Check every document matches the microchip number

Travel and arrival:

- ☐ Feed light, hydrate, exercise, arrive early
- ☐ Clear customs and import inspection
- ☐ Collect or hand over, or transfer to quarantine
- ☐ Settle the pet with routine, familiar items, and patience

Highlighted takeaway: Print this page, pin it up, and tick it off. A relocation done in this order is a relocation that arrives safely.

12. Answers to the Questions Owners Ask Us Most

These are the questions owners put to us most often before a move, answered plainly so you can act on them. Each is short by design, and the section it points back to holds the full detail.

How long does international pet relocation take from start to finish? Most moves need three to six months, and strict rabies-free destinations such as Australia or Japan can need six to seven.

Can my pet fly in the cabin or must it travel as cargo? Small cats and dogs can sometimes fly in-cabin, but larger pets and most long-haul routes require the pressurised, temperature-controlled hold or manifest cargo.

Do I need a rabies titre test, and how early? Many rabies-free and higher-risk-country routes require it, and because a long waiting period follows a passing result, it should be one of the first things you plan.

Which countries require quarantine, and for how long? Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, and Hawaii are common examples, with stays ranging from around ten days to as long as 180 depending on preparation.

How much does it cost to move a pet abroad? Expect roughly £500 to £1,500 for a simple EU move and £4,000 to £10,000 or more for a long-haul move to a quarantine destination.

Is it safe for my pet to fly in cargo? Yes, the live-animal section of the hold is pressurised and temperature-controlled to cabin standard and is a routine, closely managed part of air travel.

Do snub-nosed breeds have travel restrictions? Yes, many airlines refuse to carry brachycephalic breeds such as Bulldogs, Pugs, and Persians in the hold, so their routing needs careful planning.

What happens if my paperwork is incomplete on arrival? Your pet can be detained, held at your cost, or in the worst case refused entry, which is why every date and microchip number must match exactly.

Should I sedate my pet for the flight? Most vets advise against it because sedation affects breathing and balance at altitude, and a well-acclimated crate calms an animal far more safely.

Can rabbits and small pets be relocated internationally? Yes in many cases, though rules vary sharply by species and country, and some destinations restrict or refuse certain small animals entirely.

13. Speak to a Specialist Before You Book Anything

Everything in this guide points to one conclusion. An international pet relocation is entirely manageable, but it is unforgiving of a single missed date, a mismatched number, or a rejected crate. One error early can undo months of work and cost far more than the mistake itself.

That is the exact risk we exist to remove.

At **Pets Lets Travel**, we handle the moves that keep owners awake at night. Quarantine countries. Snub-nosed breeds. Multi-leg journeys through third countries. Tight postings where there is no room for error. We manage the sequencing, the paperwork, the airline booking, the crate, and the clearance at the other end, so your pet arrives safely and you keep your sanity.

Before you spend on vaccinations, book a flight, or commit to a date, talk to us. A short conversation now can save months later. We will look at your specific pet, your destination, and your deadline, then tell you honestly whether this is a move you can manage alone or one where our oversight protects both your pet and your budget. Either way, you leave the call knowing exactly what your relocation involves and what it should cost.

Book a Consultation

Schedule a discovery call with our relocation team. Tell us your pet, your destination, and your timeline, and we will map the safest route and an honest cost before you commit to anything.

Your pet is family. Let us get them there the right way.

Meta and Production Notes

Meta title (58 characters): International Pet Relocation Guide: Move Pets Abroad

Meta description (114 characters): We walk you through every step of moving your pet overseas safely, from vaccinations to customs and arrival.

This guide is provided for general information. Import rules, timelines, and costs change frequently and vary by country. Always confirm current requirements with the official government portal of your destination and your veterinary surgeon before travelling. Pets Lets Travel can help you interpret and act on those requirements for your specific move.