

UK to Europe Pet Import Guide: Everything Owners Need Before Moving a Pet Abroad

Moving from the UK to Europe with a pet is no longer the simple hop it was before Brexit. Since the UK became a "third country" for EU pet travel purposes, owners now face a different paperwork trail, new timing rules and a health certificate that expires far sooner than the old pet passport did. This guide breaks the entire process into clear, checkable steps so you know exactly what your dog, cat or ferret needs, when to book each appointment and what the whole move is likely to cost.

Whether you are relocating for work, retiring abroad or simply taking an extended trip across the Channel, this guide covers the regulatory groundwork. If you already know your pet needs professional transport support, our team also runs dedicated services for [private pet jet transport from the UK to Europe](#), and for owners with less conventional companions, we cover [alpaca transport from the UK to Europe](#) and [gecko transport from the UK to Europe](#) as well.

Quick Answer: What You Need in Brief

If you only read one section, read this one.

Requirement	Detail
Microchip	ISO 11784/11785 compliant, fitted before rabies vaccination
Rabies vaccination	Must be given after the microchip and at least 21 days before travel
Health document	UK-issued Animal Health Certificate (AHC), not the old pet passport
AHC validity	10 days for entry into the EU, then usable for onward EU travel for 4 months
Vet visit timing	AHC must be issued within 10 days of travel by an Official Veterinarian
Tapeworm treatment	Required for dogs entering Finland, Ireland, Malta and Norway
Approved routes	Entry only through a Travellers' Point of Entry (TPE) with a Border Control Post

Species covered Dogs, cats and ferrets under the EU pet travel scheme; other species need separate import permits

Why the Rules Changed After Brexit

Before 2021, a UK-issued EU pet passport lasted a pet's lifetime and allowed repeated travel between Britain and the continent with minimal fuss. That changed when the UK left the EU pet travel scheme and became a listed third country. Every trip from the UK into the EU now requires a fresh Animal Health Certificate, issued by an Official Veterinarian (OV) close to your departure date, rather than a one-off passport.

This shift matters most for anyone making a permanent move. A holiday traveller might tolerate the short paperwork window, but someone relocating a household needs to plan the certificate timing around removals, flights and ferry bookings, all of which have their own separate deadlines.

Step-by-Step Timeline for a UK to Europe Pet Move

Breaking the process into a timeline makes it far easier to track than a long list of rules.

12 Weeks Before Travel

- Confirm your destination country's specific entry rules, since a small number of EU states add extra conditions beyond the baseline EU scheme.
- Check your pet's microchip is ISO compliant and readable. Older or non-standard chips may need replacing.
- Book your Official Veterinarian appointment slots in advance, since availability tightens close to peak relocation season.

21+ Days Before Travel

- Ensure your pet's rabies vaccination is current. If this is a first vaccination, it must be given after the microchip and the 21-day countdown starts from the injection date, not the appointment date.
- If your pet has never been vaccinated against rabies, build in extra time, since a first dose needs the full 21-day wait before travel is permitted at all.

10 Days Before Travel

- This is when the Animal Health Certificate window opens. The AHC can only be issued within 10 days of your travel date, so schedule this appointment carefully around your flight, ferry or Eurotunnel crossing.
- Bring vaccination records, microchip confirmation and your travel itinerary to this appointment.

1 to 5 Days Before Travel

- If travelling to Finland, Ireland, Malta or Norway, arrange the mandatory tapeworm treatment for dogs. This must be administered by a vet between 24 hours and 120 hours (1 to 5 days) before arrival.
- Reconfirm your entry point has an operational Border Control Post that accepts pet entries, since not every port or airport does.

Documents You Actually Need

Owners often assume the old pet passport still applies. It does not, for UK-issued documents. Here is what replaces it.

Animal Health Certificate (AHC)

Issued by an OV, this single-trip certificate confirms your pet's microchip number, vaccination history and health status. It is valid for entry into the EU for 10 days from issue, then remains valid for continued travel within the EU (and back into the UK) for four months from the date of issue.

Microchip Documentation

Proof of an ISO-compliant chip fitted before the rabies vaccine. Vets will scan and confirm this at the AHC appointment.

Rabies Vaccination Record

A dated record showing the vaccine was administered after microchipping, with enough time elapsed to meet the 21-day rule.

Tapeworm Treatment Certificate (where applicable)

Required for dog entry into Finland, Ireland, Malta and Norway. Not required for cats or ferrets.

Non-Commercial Movement Declaration

Confirms the pet is travelling with its owner or an authorised person and is not part of a commercial sale or transfer.

What It Costs to Move a Pet From the UK to Europe

Costs vary by species, size, destination and transport method, but here is a realistic breakdown for planning purposes.

Item	Typical Cost (GBP)
Microchipping	£15 to £30
Rabies vaccination	£40 to £75

Animal Health Certificate appointment	£100 to £250
Tapeworm treatment (where required)	£20 to £45
Pet-friendly ferry or Eurotunnel crossing	£25 to £50 per pet
Commercial flight pet cargo or cabin fee	£150 to £600+
Private pet transport	Quoted per route and pet size

Costs climb quickly for larger dogs, exotic species or moves requiring specialist transport crates. Building a buffer of at least 15 to 20 percent above your initial estimate is sensible, since additional vet visits or rebooked appointments are common when timelines shift.

Choosing How Your Pet Actually Travels

Once the paperwork is sorted, the physical journey is the next decision. Owners generally choose between three routes.

Self-Drive via Ferry or Eurotunnel Works well for dogs and cats travelling with an owner who is also driving to the destination. Pets typically stay in the vehicle or a designated pet area for the crossing.

Commercial Flight (Cabin or Cargo) Suits smaller pets for cabin travel, with larger dogs usually routed as manifest cargo. Airline-specific crate and weight rules apply on top of the general import rules above.

Private and Specialist Transport For owners who want a calmer, single-purpose journey, or who are moving a pet that is not well suited to standard commercial routes, our [private pet jet service between the UK and Europe](#) offers a dedicated alternative. We also handle less typical companions, including [alpaca transport](#) for smallholders relocating livestock and [gecko transport](#) for reptile owners who need climate-controlled handling.

Country-Specific Points to Watch

The EU pet travel scheme sets a shared baseline, but a handful of member states apply extra conditions.

Country	Extra Requirement
Ireland	Mandatory tapeworm treatment for dogs, 1 to 5 days before arrival
Finland	Mandatory tapeworm treatment for dogs, 1 to 5 days before arrival
Malta	Mandatory tapeworm treatment for dogs, 1 to 5 days before arrival

Norway	Mandatory tapeworm treatment for dogs, 1 to 5 days before arrival (Norway is not an EU member but follows the same scheme)
France	High volume of UK crossings; book AHC appointments and ferry pet slots well ahead in summer
Spain	Regional entry points can have inconsistent Border Control Post opening hours; confirm before travel
Germany	Some airlines apply stricter crate specifications than the baseline EU rules

Always cross-check the destination country's national agriculture or veterinary authority page close to your travel date, since individual states can update requirements with limited notice.

Common Mistakes That Delay a Move

A few recurring errors account for most last-minute problems.

- **Vaccinating before microchipping.** If the rabies shot is given first, it does not count and the pet needs to be revaccinated after the chip is fitted, restarting the 21-day clock.
- **Booking the AHC appointment too early.** Since the certificate is only valid for 10 days, an appointment booked too far ahead of travel results in an expired document.
- **Missing the tapeworm window.** The treatment must fall within 24 to 120 hours of arrival in Finland, Ireland, Malta or Norway. Too early or too late both fail the check.
- **Assuming any port will do.** Only Travellers' Points of Entry with an active Border Control Post can process pet arrivals. Not every ferry terminal or regional airport qualifies.
- **Forgetting the return journey.** If the move is not permanent, remember that travel back into the UK also has its own certificate and timing rules.

Working With a Specialist

Owners managing a household relocation already have enough logistics to coordinate without also becoming an expert in EU animal health law. A specialist pet relocation service can align the vet appointments, transport booking and border paperwork into a single schedule, which is often the difference between a smooth departure date and a delayed one.

If your move involves a dog, cat or ferret on a standard commercial or self-drive route, the checklist above will carry you through. If it involves a larger transport need or a less common species, our team can advise directly. You can review our [private pet jet transport option](#), our [alpaca transport service](#) or our [gecko transport service](#) for route-specific detail, or reach out to us to plan a move that fits your timeline.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does my pet still need an EU pet passport to travel from the UK?

No, UK-issued pet passports are no longer valid for EU entry; you need a fresh Animal Health Certificate for each trip.

How long before travel do I need the rabies vaccination?

At least 21 days before travel, and only if the vaccine was given after the microchip was fitted.

How long is the Animal Health Certificate valid?

It permits entry into the EU for 10 days, then covers further EU travel for up to four months from the issue date.

Do cats need the same paperwork as dogs?

Cats need the microchip, rabies vaccination and Animal Health Certificate, but not the tapeworm treatment required for dogs entering some countries.

Which countries require tapeworm treatment for dogs?

Finland, Ireland, Malta and Norway all require it, given 1 to 5 days before arrival.

Can I enter the EU through any ferry port or airport?

No, entry is only permitted through a Travellers' Point of Entry with an active Border Control Post.

What happens if my Animal Health Certificate expires before I travel?

You will need a new appointment with an Official Veterinarian to issue a fresh certificate, since an expired one cannot be extended.

Is professional pet transport worth it for a permanent move?

For larger pets, longer routes or animals with specific health or comfort needs, specialist transport often reduces stress and risk compared with standard commercial options.

Do exotic pets like reptiles follow the same rules as dogs and cats?

No, species outside the EU pet travel scheme, such as reptiles, typically need separate import permits and health checks specific to that species.

Should I start the process before or after booking my flight or ferry?

Confirm your travel date first, since the Animal Health Certificate appointment must be timed precisely around it.

