

EXOTIC TRAVEL DISEASES IN DOGS



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Hundreds of dogs travel to and from the UK each year under the Pet Travel Scheme. As you are aware, the main purpose of this scheme in the UK is to prevent the introduction of Rabies virus and the fox tapeworm (*Echinococcus multilocularis*) into this country.

However, several other important diseases not currently present in the UK may be a risk for pets who travel. Just as people who travel to certain foreign countries need certain vaccines or preventatives, it is equally important to employ similar tactics for your pet when abroad.

Our major concerns when travelling abroad with your pet are the following:
Heartworm, Leishmania, Babesia, Anaplasma, and Ehrlichia.

Heartworm is transmitted by mosquitos, leishmania by sandflies, and the others by ticks. The time between exposure to the parasite and becoming unwell for some of these diseases can vary from weeks to years and the symptoms themselves can be vague and non-specific. Even with prompt diagnosis and treatment, infection can sometimes result in severely disabling chronic problems or even fatal disease.

It is therefore far better to try and prevent these diseases from being contracted than having to deal with the potential consequences and the simplest strategy is the following:

1. Prevention of heartworm begins at least 1 month before departure and continues monthly until at least one treatment after returning to the UK. If your pet is currently on lungworm prevention, this also covers against heartworm. These include: **Milbemax chewable tablets, Nexgard Spectra chewable tablets, and Advocate spot-on treatment.**
2. Vaccination against leishmania is available by special request. If your pet has not travelled before, then they will receive a series of 3 injections given 3 weeks apart and then yearly boosters. If your pet has travelled before, they will need a blood test first to confirm that there has been no exposure before we can start the vaccination series.
3. The risk of picking up babesia, anaplasma, and ehrlichia is reduced by the elimination, or discouragement, of the carrier organisms - ticks, sandflies and mosquitoes. This begins at least 24 hours before departure and continues regularly (monthly or 3 monthly depending on product) until after returning to the UK. Your pet is currently on oral tick prevention, then they are also covered against exotic ticks. These include: **Bravecto chewable tablets** and **Nexgard Spectra chewable tablets.**
4. Using a repellent collar (such as **Scalibor**) will reduce exposure to mosquitos, sandflies, and ticks. If possible, don't walk at dawn or dusk in warm months and try to avoid areas with lots of standing water (breeding grounds for mosquitos) and heavily wooded areas (breeding grounds for ticks).
5. Although treatment with praziquantel for fox tapeworm is required for re-entry, DEFRA also recommends a second treatment within 28 days after returning to the UK.

Please refer to the [DEFRA website](http://www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad) for the most up-to-date details of travel requirements:

www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad

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