

Along for the Ride

By Bennett Leigh

Europeans love their pets as much as anyone else, but there are some specific rules about bringing Fido or Fluffy when you move to a European Union country, including Italy, Germany and Great Britain.

Dogs and cats are required to have an identification number, either on a visible tattoo or as a microchip. As of 3 July 2011, tattoos are no longer accepted. Pet passports are also now required for pets traveling between EU countries. All pets entering a European Union country must also have a completed veterinary certificate, found in English at http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/liveanimals/pets/sanco10767r4_en.pdf. Please remember that this certificate travels with your pet.

Many European countries also have limitations on certain types of dog breeds they deem as dangerous. For example, in Great Britain, it is illegal to possess a pit bull terrier, a Japanese tosa, a Dogo Argentino or a Fila Brasileiro. If you bring one of these animals into the country, you could be prosecuted and the animal, destroyed. In Germany, the rules vary from state to state, but most consider pit bulls, Staffordshire bull terriers and American Staffordshire terriers too dangerous, and several include Rottweilers in the mix. If these dogs are not banned outright from the German states, they are subject to high licensing fees, and are required to be spayed or neutered and must be muzzled and on a leash whenever they leave the owner's property.

And anyone with rare or unusual pets should seek advice from their new country's embassy. Some species are subject to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Owners should consult the CITES website at www.cites.org for their specific pet.

Most installation veterinarians are up-to-speed on any changes to pet travel, so be sure to contact their office as soon as you know you are moving overseas. The

vet should be able to steer you in the right direction with necessary vaccinations, documentation and timelines.

Relaxing Restrictions

The big news comes from Great Britain, which is actually relaxing their very strict requirements, making it cheaper and easier to travel abroad with pets. Their new regulations, which bring the country in line with the rest of the EU, will go into effect 1 January 2012.

Officials say the old practice of forcing pets to spend six months in quarantine, which dated from the 1800s, is no longer necessary because of vastly improved rabies vaccines and treatments.



All pets will still need to be vaccinated against rabies. Pets from the EU and listed non-EU countries such as the USA and Australia will no longer need a blood test and will only have to wait 21 days before they travel. Not complying with the order of the regulations could result in a six-month quarantine of your pet, at your expense. To read the specifics, visit the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs website at www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/index.htm.

In Germany, owners are legally responsible for anything their pet does. For example, if a dog runs in front of a motorcyclist and causes an accident, the dog's owner is then held responsible for the crash and whatever damage is caused to people or property. Insurance companies offer a special personal liability policy for dog owners. It is highly recommended that you purchase this coverage if you bring a pet to Germany.

To bring your pet into Italy, you must have a veterinarian's certificate stating the animal is in good health and that it has been vaccinated for rabies between 20 days and 11 months prior to entry. Customs officials could require a health examination of any pet if it comes directly from tropical regions or if they suspect it may be ill. Dogs must be on a leash or muzzled when in public in Italy.

You may bring up to five animals into Belgium, provided that three certificates have been completed: the EU veterinary certificate; an International Health Certificate completed by an APHIS-accredited veterinarian who certifies animal health status, conducts tests, and records test results for the individual animals being exported from the United States; and a Belgium Application for Import or Transit Authorization for Live Animals.

Rules for each country can change at any time, so it's a good idea to double-check with the state department or on sites including www.pettravel.com/ for the most updated information. No matter which country you are moving to, it's a good idea to get the facts well in advance to make the move easier for you and your pet. ●

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Some Helpful websites:

Belgium: www.diplobel.us/TravelingBelgium/Pets/CatDogFerret.asp

Great Britain: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/pets/travel/>

Germany: <http://germany.angloinfo.com/countries/germany/pettravel.asp>

European Union: http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/liveanimals/pets/index_en.htm

Italy: <http://italy.usembassy.gov/pet.html>