

Department for Environment, food and Rural Affairs

Pet travel: Travelling with assistance dogs

EU Regulation on Maritime Passenger Rights

Guidance for cruise companies that are not currently approved to carry pets and/or assistance dogs on any of their services

This guidance contains important information relating to a change in the law regarding the carriage of recognised assistance dogs on ferries and cruise ships in the UK.

On 18 December 2012, the EU Regulation on Maritime Passenger Rights (1177/2010) enters into force in the UK with immediate effect. Regulation 1177/2010 will apply to all ferry services entering and leaving the UK, as well as cruise services which embark from any EU member state (including the UK) and which disembark or make a transit stop at a UK port¹. From this date, ferry and cruise carriers will be legally obliged to accept on-board disabled persons or persons with reduced mobility who might be accompanied by a recognised assistance dog.

This guidance sets out how the introduction of EU Regulation 1177/2010 may affect your company's operations in Great Britain if you are not currently approved to carry pets or assistance dogs on your cruise services under the Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals Order 2011. If your company has services that disembark in Northern Ireland, you should contact the authorities there for further information².

EU animal health import controls

Every pet dog, cat or ferret entering Great Britain is checked to ensure it complies with EU Regulation 998/2003 on the animal health requirements applicable to the non-commercial movement of pet animals (commonly known as "the EU pet travel scheme"). The EU pet travel scheme exists to protect animals and the public from the risk of rabies and other exotic diseases. EU Regulation 998/2003 sets out the import conditions that all pets must comply with when being moved between EU Member States and into the European Union from non-EU countries. The compliance checks are routinely carried out by rail, air and maritime carriers in Great Britain.

¹ Certain carriers are exempt from Regulation 1177/2010. Detailed guidance on is available on the DfT website - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-guidance-notes-relating-to-regulation-eu-no-1177-2010>

² Department for Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland

What will assistance dog owners need to do?

It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure that his or her assistance dog meets the requirements of the EU pet travel scheme. For a dog moving between EU member states, or from certain non-EU “listed” countries³ the requirements are, in the following order: a microchip for identification, a vaccine to protect against rabies, and a waiting period of 21 days to ensure that the animal is not incubating rabies at the time the vaccination takes place. For assistance dogs arriving from all other countries (the non-EU “unlisted” countries) a blood sample must also be taken at least 30 days after vaccination to prove the vaccination has been effective. This is followed by a three month waiting period.

A tapeworm treatment needs to be given by a vet between 24 and 120 hours prior to scheduled entry into the UK. The details of these preparations need to be set out in an EU pet passport or third country certificate (if the dog is travelling from outside the EU). Detailed information on how to prepare an assistance dog for travel under the EU pet travel scheme can be found on the Defra website:

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

Any assistance dog that does not comply with Regulation 998/2003 may not be able to enter Great Britain, or may be licensed into quarantine on arrival. Non-EU countries may additionally have their own import controls that assistance dog owners will need to familiarise themselves with, if they wish to disembark there with their assistance dog.

What will cruise operators need to do?

From 18 December 2012, cruise operators subject to EU Regulation 1177/2010 will need to carry out compliance checks on assistance dogs travelling with disabled persons or persons with reduced mobility intending to disembark in Great Britain to ensure they meet the import requirements under the EU pet travel scheme. The way in which the compliance checks will be undertaken will be set out in an agreement, or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), between your company and the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA).

If you are not currently approved to carry pets on any of your services, you will be carrying out these compliance checks for the first time. These checks are necessary to ensure assistance dogs are fully compliant with EU import requirements as well as to ensure that your company is fully compliant with the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and other Mammals) Order 1974. Under this legislation, it is an offence to import, or to attempt to import a dog into Great Britain that is not compliant with the EU pet travel scheme.

³ For details of EU member states, non-EU “listed” countries and non-EU “unlisted” countries go to <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/pets/travel/pets/countries/>

You will need to register with the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) and will be required to sign up to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU is an agreement between AHVLA and the cruise operator which sets out the checking procedures that the operator will follow in order to ensure that any assistance dogs entering Great Britain are compliant with the rules under the EU pet travel scheme.

In the interim period while a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is being prepared for your specific routes, AHVLA will support you through the process of carrying out the compliance checks. On taking a booking, you will need to request copies of the relevant animal health documentation from the assistance dog owner. **The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) will give you a list of the documents that the assistance dog owner will need to send to you.** You will need to send copies of this documentation to AHVLA in good time before the date of sailing. **They will help you carry out the compliance check by confirming that the documentation is in order.** We recommend that these checks are carried out as far in advance of embarkation as possible. This will allow plenty of time for any issues to be resolved.

You will also need to have an electronic microchip scanner available each time an assistance dog embarks onto one of your vessels⁴. On embarkation, a member of staff will need to hand the scanner to the owner so that they can scan the assistance dog's microchip. The member of staff will then need to check that the microchip number matches the number in the accompanying official documentation. On disembarkation, a final check may be needed to ensure that the tapeworm treatment has been correctly applied⁵. AHVLA will be able to explain these checks to you in more detail.

Next steps

We recommend that you get in touch with the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) to discuss these new arrangements as soon as possible. They will be able to respond to any questions or queries that you might have.

We appreciate that these changes may affect your business operations. We need to ensure that the process of checking every pet animal entering Great Britain continues to operate effectively. AHVLA will work with you to ensure these changes cause you as little disruption as possible.

⁴ AHVLA will be able to advise you on the type of scanner that you will need to buy.

⁵ Where the duration of the cruise is less than five days, the tapeworm treatment can be applied prior to embarkation. Otherwise, it will need to be carried out by a veterinarian at an appropriate transit stop. AHVLA will be able to give you further advice on this.

Please call the AHLVA imports team on 01245 398298 or email ahitchelmsford@ahvla.gsi.gov.uk