

Department for Environment, food and Rural Affairs

Pet travel: Travelling with assistance dogs

EU Regulation on Maritime Passenger Rights

Guidance for ferry and cruise companies that are already approved to carry pets and/or assistance dogs on all or some 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.

These changes may affect your company's operations in Great Britain. 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 (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 ferry and cruise ship operators need to do?

From 18 December 2012, all ferry and cruise ship 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 travelling on services to 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 the company and the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA).

If your company already transports pets on some or all of your ferry or cruise ship services then you will be familiar with these checks and the EU pet travel scheme. You should check assistance dogs in the same way that you would check any other pet dog travelling on one of your currently approved routes⁴. You will not have to

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/>

⁴ Currently pets –including assistance dogs – can only be transported by ferry or other maritime passenger services on routes approved by the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA). From 18 December, passengers with assistance dogs will be able to travel on any route, whether approved or not.

make any changes to the way you carry out compliance checks on these routes. You will, however, be required to adopt similar procedures on all routes that you operate and that are within the scope of EU Regulation 1177/2010. If you operate any routes that do not currently have RMOPs in place, you will need to work with AHVLA to establish the best methods for carrying out checks on assistance dogs on these routes. AHVLA will then complete an MoU setting out these procedures. We recommend that you contact your local AHVLA office as soon as possible in order to coordinate this

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 articles 4 and 16 of this Order , it is an offence to land , or to attempt to land a dog in Great Britain that is not compliant with the EU pet travel scheme.

Next steps

For any passenger routes you operate that are not covered by an RMOP, please contact your local AHVLA office. They will be able to agree a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) relating to the carriage of recognised assistance dogs. The MoU is similar to the existing RMOP (Required Method of Operation) agreement but specifically covers the carriage of assistance dogs by sea.

If all of your routes are currently covered by an RMOP, you should continue to check assistance dogs for compliance with the EU pet travel scheme. In due course, AHVLA will issue you with an MoU covering the carriage of assistance dogs. If appropriate, you will also receive a revised RMOP (relating to the carriage of pet animals other than assistance dogs).

If you wish to discuss the new arrangements, please call the AHLVA imports team on 01245 398298 or email ahitchelmsford@ahvla.gsi.gov.uk