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DISEASE SCREENING IN IMPORTED PETS

The PETS travel scheme has been in place for almost 25 years now and many pet owners have taken advantage of this to travel with their companions around Europe. We are also seeing ever increasing numbers of animals, dogs in particular, being rehomed from abroad.

Living in the UK we have been lucky enough to avoid many infectious diseases, but with the increase in traveling pets and potentially the effects of global warming this is starting to change. These infections can have serious consequences for our pets and in some cases can be transmitted to people with life changing results.

Some of these infections are spread by a secondary host such as mosquitos, sandflies and ticks and others are spread by direct contact with infected animals or contaminated bodily fluids.

In recent years, there has been an increasing number of rescue dogs coming from Eastern European countries such as Romania. The bacterial infection *Brucella canis* can be carried by outwardly normal looking animals and can then be passed onto in contact people by contaminated bodily fluids. The risk of this is considered to be low for the general public but is increased in certain circumstances such as during surgery or when an animal is hospitalised, which is why we ask to test these animals to keep our staff safe.

Most tests involve blood tests looking for raised antibody levels i.e. exposure to the disease. In some cases we can culture a bacteria or use a microscope to look for a parasite from samples taken from the skin, lymph nodes or blood. To complicate matters some diseases may take time (sometimes several months) before they produce an identifiable antibody level in the blood or can lie dormant inside the lymph nodes or bone marrow before causing recognisable symptoms in your pet. In these cases, samples may need to be repeated several times.

If you are thinking of rehoming a pet from abroad, please contact the surgery and one of our team can talk to you about the risk of imported diseases for you, your family and your other pets. We can also advise on diseases that can be tested prior to entering the UK although please remember some of these tests may need to be repeated.

If you are taking your pet on holiday abroad with you, we can advise about preventative measures to protect your pet from infections.

The following website <https://www.esccap.org/> has some excellent, country specific information as well as more detail about individual diseases caused by parasites.

You can find out more about *Brucella canis* here: <https://www.bva.co.uk/pet-owners-and-breeders/advice-for-pet-owners/brucella-canis-what-animal-owners-need-to-know/>.