

# PET TRAVEL FROM THE UK TO Portugal (EU)

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This article only applies to dogs, cats and ferrets travelling to the EU – it does **not** apply to pet hamsters, rabbits, birds, guinea pigs, horses, poultry, reptiles, livestock, or other 'exotic' animals from the UK.

Moving your pet to a new country is often the part of the immigration process that generates the most anxiety and worry, especially with pets of a nervous disposition who have never travelled before. Hopefully this article will help you follow the procedure correctly and be somewhat reassured that all will go well, and your cat or dog will safely arrive in their new home in Portugal.

Before you start arranging your pet's travel to Portugal, there are a few things to consider first which may affect the process.

## HOW OLD IS YOUR PET?

You may not import a dog or cat which is **less than 12 weeks old**. The earliest age that rabies vaccination can be administered is 12 weeks of age.

Puppies and kittens from cannot enter the EU until they are at **least 7 months of age**.

## HOW MANY PETS CAN YOU IMPORT?

The number of animals you can import in one 'shipment' dictates whether they are considered a **commercial import or non-commercial import**.

A maximum of **5 animals of the same species** (5 dogs or 5 cats or 5 ferrets) per person/owner is allowed as a non- commercial import **ONLY** if...

- The owner is travelling with them or is travelling within 5 days of the animals travelling.
- The animal(s) is not intended for sale or transfer of ownership.
- The animal(s) must be 7 months or older.

Family pets will generally be non-commercial imports. However, there are instances where the owner may not be able to travel with the animal or within 5 days of the animal travelling. This means your animal will be issued with a 'commercial' health certificate, but the health procedure and rabies vaccination regulations are the same.

There must be **one nominated owner for the whole process of export/ import** of the total number of animals in one 'shipment'. Ah, ha you might say...what if...

... you are coming to Portugal as a couple and have more than the stipulated number of pets, say 9 dogs, that you want to bring. You could technically place 5 dogs under the official ownership of one person and the remaining 4 dogs under the official ownership of the other person. However, this would need be organised before the veterinary health export documentation is started in the UK and when you reunite all the animals in Portugal you may fall foul of the Portuguese law on how many pets can be kept in a single household. See the next point...

## HOW MANY DOGS & CATS CAN YOU KEEP IN PORTUGAL?

Legally you can have up to 3 dogs or 4 cats, not exceeding a total of 4 animals per household, in apartments or urban houses. The owner is responsible for the animal with regards to hygiene, health, and environmental issues like 'noise pollution' that may affect the neighbours, such as a dog barking incessantly.

Prevention of noise and the control of noise pollution (dogs barking)

Decree-Law No. 9/2007 <https://dre.pt/pesquisa/-/search/522807/details/maximized>

Legally an apartment owner may not discriminate or fail to lease an apartment to a potential tenant just because she/he has an animal. However, if a private owner really does not want pets in the property, there is little that can be done to persuade him otherwise.

You can keep up to 6 dogs or cats if you apply to the local Camara for authorisation, which must be agreed by the municipal veterinarian and the health official.

In rustic or mixed rustic urban properties, up to six adult pets (as opposed to livestock) can be kept, and this number may even be exceeded if the size of the land allows it, and the accommodation conditions comply with the established standards.

So, if you know you want to bring in lots of dogs (say, more than 6, divided between 2 nominated related owners) into Portugal, it would be preferable to have suitable accommodation purchased or rented with the local authorisation in place, before travel.

## IS YOUR DOG A 'DANGEROUS' BREED OR CROSSBREED?

It is a common misapprehension that potentially 'dangerous' dogs are banned from travel and entry into Portugal. There are NO banned dog breeds – you can bring a

listed dangerous dog breed or crossbreed, but you will need to comply with certain specific regulations.

The following breeds are considered dangerous or potentially dangerous regarding non-commercial entry into Portugal from the UK and are subject to special regulation:

- Fila brasileiro (Brazilian Mastiff)
- Dogo argentino
- Pit bull terrier
- Rottweiler.
- American Staffordshire terrier
- Staffordshire bull terrier
- Tosa inu

Crossbreeds of the above breeds are also considered dangerous or potentially dangerous and are also subject to special regulation.

These dangerous breeds will still have to undergo the same health import procedures but in addition, the owner must complete a **statement or notification of responsibility** to be submitted to Directorate of Food and Veterinary Services on entry to Portugal.

This statement identifies the owner and the dog and makes a declaration that the dog will remain at the given address permanently or for a period longer than 4 months.

You will also need to submit **proof that the dog has been sterilised**.

If your dangerous dog has been previously sterilised in the UK, ask your vet to supply an official signed letter as proof of completion of sterilisation of the animal.

**If the dog has not been sterilised** it will need to be done as soon as possible in Portugal and the confirmation of this procedure must be sent to the DGAV within 15 days of the procedure. So, it might be preferable to factor in getting the dog sterilised in the UK before making travel plans.

Once you and your dog are in Portugal, the dog will need to go to the vet to read the microchip and be formally **registered on the SIAC database**. (This applies to all dogs and cats, not just those deemed dangerous). At the same time, register the dog at the vet and get a Pet Health Record Booklet, where all the future inoculations, etc will be logged.

Then you must go to your local parish council (Junta de Freguesia) to obtain an **annual dog licence**. This also applies to all dogs but in the case of dangerous breeds, there is additional required information...

- Identification of the species and, where possible, the breed of the animal.
- The complete identification of the owner.
- The place and type of habitual accommodation for the animal.
- Records of incidents of aggression.

Before you go to the Junta de Freguesia, you will need to obtain and take with you:

- The dog's Portuguese veterinary health booklet.
- A letter from the PSP to state you have registered to attend a course on how to handle a potentially dangerous dog.
- A Portuguese police criminal record check. This is because some dangerous dogs maybe have been utilised as a 'weapon' and it is necessary to check the owner is not a criminal.

Once you have attended the Junta de Freguesia with the above information, you will be issued with a **provisional dangerous dog licence**. Once you have attended the dangerous dog handling course, you will get a **full licence**.

**Application form for the dangerous dog handling course:**

[https://www.psp.pt/Documents/CAES\\_PERIGOSOS%20OU%20POTENCIALMENTE%20PERIGOSOS/DETENTORES/Ficha%20de%20Inscri%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20-%20DETENTORES.pdf?fbclid=IwAR29GpaX85KENq2qs5jE1FeKZ5LKCiJMBPbdgMjuGdoht5mQiLKTcQAZ-5o](https://www.psp.pt/Documents/CAES_PERIGOSOS%20OU%20POTENCIALMENTE%20PERIGOSOS/DETENTORES/Ficha%20de%20Inscri%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20-%20DETENTORES.pdf?fbclid=IwAR29GpaX85KENq2qs5jE1FeKZ5LKCiJMBPbdgMjuGdoht5mQiLKTcQAZ-5o)

**When you have completed the form, you email it to the PSP headquarters of your province:**

[https://www.psp.pt/Documents/CAES\\_PERIGOSOS%20OU%20POTENCIALMENTE%20PERIGOSOS/DETENTORES/Lista%20de%20endere%C3%A7os%20PSP.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1xjcUi8P92hgK4ovMByXL5MCN2TPQxRbcpFaB1ixKaloTbj5Twj9tjDAU](https://www.psp.pt/Documents/CAES_PERIGOSOS%20OU%20POTENCIALMENTE%20PERIGOSOS/DETENTORES/Lista%20de%20endere%C3%A7os%20PSP.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1xjcUi8P92hgK4ovMByXL5MCN2TPQxRbcpFaB1ixKaloTbj5Twj9tjDAU)

The owner of any dangerous or potentially dangerous dog is obliged to have **civil liability insurance** to cover any damage caused by it. There are also further regulations on **muzzles**, preventing escapes and **fencing requirements**.

**Further reading on Portuguese dangerous dog law:**

Decree-Law no. 315/2009 <https://dre.pt/home/-/dre/483402/details/maximized>

Decree-Law no. 46/2013 Amendment <https://dre.pt/pesquisa/-/search/497605/details/maximized>

## IN THE UK BEFORE TRAVEL

Work out your travel plans and correlate them with the pet export process. There may be instances when you need to travel earlier or later than your animal and may not be with them if they travel overland with a pet transport company.

**You need to start the animal export process in good time before the animal travels. Why?**

The process must be conducted to a specific time frame and any slip up may possibly mean travel delays or if the animal travelled with incomplete or incorrect documentation, they could be refused entry or quarantined on arrival in Portugal at the owner's expense.

If your animal is having its **first or primary rabies vaccination**, you must wait **21 days** before it can travel. Day 1 is the day after the rabies vaccination. You do not need to wait to travel after a booster rabies vaccination if there has been no break in the rabies vaccine cover.

It is useful to start a file or folder for each animal you want to import. Enter all the original documents and keep a spare file of copies.

## AT YOUR OWN UK VET

Check whether your own vet is experienced in preparing the animal for international export. Some vets may not be, so you might have to steer the process and keep an eye on the documents being completed correctly.

Throughout the whole export process, check that *every* document has the **animal's details absolutely correct** including its chip number, gender, sterility status, age, and breed. Also, check that every document has the **correct details of who is the nominated owner** who is exporting the animal. Even though the animal may be a family pet, there must be one nominated owner for the export procedure.

Animals of non-specific breeds should be described on documents. For example, as 'short-haired tabby domestic cat' or 'mixed breed small dog', etc.

## THE UK ANIMAL HEALTH CERTIFICATE (AHC)

An EU pet passport previously issued in the UK is no longer valid for travel from the UK to the EU.

**An animal health certificate (AHC) can only be issued by an Official Veterinarian (OV)** who has been authorised by the government.

An appointment with an OV can be arranged by your own veterinary practice. When you apply for an Animal Health Certificate, you will need to take your pet, along with their vaccination and medical records including proof of rabies vaccination, to the issuing vet.

When you book an appointment, you will have a form to complete giving information that you need to supply before the AHC can be issued.

- Your owner details
- Description of your animal (breed, colour or non-specific breed)
- Rabies vaccination details. If your animal has had its primary vaccination, you will need to wait 21 days before attending the AHC appointment.
- Canine tapeworm treatment
- Intended country of entry into the EU. The AHC must be issued in the language of the country in which **you are entering the EU and not your country of destination**. So, this may be France or Spain if travelling by ferry or tunnel or Portugal if flying direct.

Tell your vet you need an Animal Health Certificate when you take your pet to get vaccinated. This gives your vet time to prepare it.

You must get an UK Animal Health Certificate in the **10 days before you enter the EU**. This means you will have 10 days to use it to leave the UK.

Animal Health Certificates can then be used for travel between EU countries (including the UK) for up to **4 months from the date your animal enters the EU**. Your pet will need a new Animal Health Certificate for each trip to an EU country.

### STEP 1: THE MICROCHIP

You must get your pet microchipped **before their rabies vaccination**. If you do not, they'll need to be vaccinated again.

The chip number must be entered in the **UK Animal Health Certificate**. Retain all the original microchip registration documents and make some copies.

If your animal has already got a microchip or is having its first microchip, it must be

compatible to be read by EU airlines, train, and ferry personnel and airport veterinary services on arrival in the EUMS country. The chip must meet International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards ISO 11784 and ISO 11785.

An owner may provide their own microchip reading device that will scan the chip of another type but as the owner may not be present when the animal is admitted into the EU (such as by air cargo), so this may not be practical.

In most cases the veterinary services that admit the animal into the EU at EU hub airports use universal readers, so this is not necessarily problematic at this stage. However, once the animal is permanently living in Portugal, your new local vet may not have the specific chip reader. As it is mandatory in Portugal to register your dog and cat with a chip number, you might have to have another locally compatible chip implanted.

## STEP 2: RABIES VACCINATION

Your vet must administer the rabies vaccination. Remember the animal must have been microchipped already.

Your animal's vaccination record must show:

- animal's date of birth (if known)
- microchip number, date it was put in or read, and where it is on your pet's body
- vaccination date
- vaccine manufacturer and product name
- vaccine batch number
- date the vaccination is valid until
- the vet's signature and contact details

The rabies vaccination will either be the animal's primary vaccination if it has not had one before or a booster. The vaccination brand used may be one that lasts 2-3 years so when you come to have rabies boosters in Portugal, your new local vet will know from the vial sticker when the next dose is due.

## STEP 3: OTHER CANINE & FELINE VACCINATIONS & ANTI-PARASITIC MEDICATIONS

Check that all the animal's general feline or canine vaccinations are up-to-date and get them updated if necessary.

Make sure the vet administers all the necessary worming medications, tick, and flea

medications. (Normally you would usually give the anti-parasitic products yourself – NOT on this occasion).

Ensure all these items are entered in the animal's medical records with product stickers, dates, and vet signature. Most anti-parasitic treatments last about 3 months, so the animal may need further doses within the last 10 days before departure.

## UK TO PORTUGAL PET TRAVEL OPTIONS

Travelling from the UK to Portugal, you have several options for your animal(s):

- Travelling with your own animal(s) via ferry or tunnel and overland through France or Spain.
- Using a pet transport company via ferry or tunnel and overland through France or Spain.
- By air direct to Portugal with you on the same flight.
- By air direct to Portugal not with you, the owner.

### **Travelling with your pets via ferry or tunnel overland in your own vehicle**

Your pet will be admitted into the EU with the microchip and health documents being checked at the port of entry in Spain or France. Then it is a straight drive through to Portugal with no further checks.

You may like to book pet-friendly hotels ahead of travel if you want to break up the journey.

### **Using a pet transport company via ferry or tunnel and overland to Portugal**

It is advisable to get recommendations and prices for different pet transport companies before making your decision on who to go with.

- Check that the company is licenced by DEFRA to carry animals. There are several scam pet transport companies operating which often use similar names to the legitimate good quality companies.
- Check the quality of the vehicles – you don't want old or unreliable vehicles that are liable to breakdown en route. Also check that they have heating and air conditioning.
- Check the drivers are competent to look after and handle animals.
- Check there will be regular comfort breaks and stops for exercise, food, and water.
- Check the travelling crates are of 'IATA standard' quality. Though IATA is an air travel standard, it should apply to the animal crates for road transportation.



This means correctly sized, comfortable, solid, securely latched, well ventilated boxes with only one way to look out so the animal cannot see any other animals in the vehicle.

- Make sure the company is familiar with all the animal travel documentation.
- Again, the microchip and documents will be checked at the port of entry into the EU and there will not be any further checks into Portugal.

### **By air direct to Portugal with you on the same flight.**

There is quite a lot of misunderstanding about animals flying out of the UK – people assume because there are strict restrictions on animals flying INTO the UK, that it applies to animals leaving the UK.

You must check with the airline first as to whether it allows cabin or booked hold checked baggage travel for animals on specific routes. For example, TAP flights departing from London Gatwick cannot carry pets as cabin or checked baggage. The budget airlines do not carry any animals at all except assistance dogs.

If you want to travel on the same flight with your animal, you have basically 2 choices:

#### **In the cabin:**

- Your animal must comply with the weight restriction which is a total weight of animal + soft container of up to **8kg / 17lb**. The container should be stored in the space under the seat, which about 40 x 33 x 17cm, depending on airline/aircraft. All pets (except assistance dogs) that exceed this weight must be carried in the hold.
- Only dogs and cats can travel in the cabin – no other types of animals.
- The soft container must have enough space for the animal to move around.
- The container must be waterproof so there are no leakages.
- The animal must be fully inside the carrier throughout the flight – no heads or tails sticking out.
- The animal must be clean and not smell.
- The animal must not threaten or disturb other passengers.
- If female, the animal must not be pregnant.

#### **In the hold as checked baggage:**

- Any dog or cat that is too big for the cabin can be booked to travel with you as checked baggage in the hold on the same flight. However, there are also weight restrictions which may apply due to the aircraft type used for specific destinations. For example, for animal + container up to **32kg / 70lb** on flights or up to **45kg / 99lb** on other flights. You must check this when you book the flight. Any very large animals will have to travel in the hold and booked on the

cargo manifest which will not be on the same flight as the owner.

- The hold travel container must be rigid, secure, correctly sized and IATA approved. If your dog is on the **dangerous dog list**, you will need to use a specific wooden or metal crate constructed to the standard of **IATA Container Requirement No. 82**, also called 'CR 82' which can be tailored to fit the dimensions of any dog.
- Be aware that many airlines will not accept **brachycephalous dogs or cats** for travel in the hold (or cabin). This is because they have short, flat muzzles, and have specific respiratory limitations making them more vulnerable to changes in air quality and temperature in the cargo hold of a plane, even though the conditions are the same as in the passenger cabin.
- You will need to make advanced booking and the animal must be checked in at least 4 hours before departure.
- You will need to book the airport veterinary check at least 48 hours in advance of the flight arrival at Lisbon, Faro, or Porto airports. See below, in section 'Arrival in Portugal'.

### **By air direct to Portugal without the owner**

The animal will have to be booked to travel on the cargo manifest with the airline of your choice. Airlines such as BA delegate animal travel to their partners, like PetAir UK. The animals will be processed through the airport animal and cargo centres at UK airports and the cargo areas at Portuguese airports. All the veterinary documentation and air waybill will be securely attached to the outside of their crate.

- Depending on your circumstances, you might find it easier to use a pet travel company who can deliver the services required for independent animal travel in the hold. They can deliver a tailored service as you may require, which could include...
- Building a custom IATA approved crate for your animal.
- Collection of your pet at your home and delivery to the airline cargo check-in point.
- Supervised check-in, including the travel crate inspection by the airline and the documentation check.
- If you can't collect your animal from the airport on arrival yourself, they can arrange customs clearance, collection, and onward transportation to your home in Portugal.
- You will need to book the airport veterinary check at least 48 hours in advance of the flight arrival at Lisbon, Faro, or Porto airports. See below, in section 'Arrival in Portugal'.

## PET CALMING FOR TRAVEL

Travel can be very stressful for some animals, and you may find it helps to use some calming products.

**No animal may be medically sedated in any way to travel by air.**

Calming collars, impregnated with pheromones, are very effective at reducing animal stress and nervousness. However, these are **no longer allowed** to be worn by pets travelling in the hold of an aircraft. It is an airline regulation that an animal is not allowed to 'wear' anything while in the travelling crate – this includes all types of collars, harnesses, or other types of 'pet clothing'. Even the normal name tag collar must be removed from the animal and securely attached to the outside of the crate.

The reason for this is to prevent a potentially stressed animal being caught up in the collar itself (such as a leg stuck in the collar) or the collar getting caught on the crate in some way.

Calming chews, toys or treats are not allowed in the travelling crate as they are loose items which may fall out of the box.

So, the calming products to use will be **liquid drops** applied to the back of the neck or **sprays** applied to the animal itself, travel blanket or the interior walls of the crate.

It is a great comfort to animals to have a small blanket or old T-shirt with the familiar scent of yourself with it in the crate.

## ARRIVAL IN PORTUGAL

As mentioned before, the veterinary check for admittance into the EU will be done at the port of entry into the EU. For those animals travelling by ferry, tunnel and road will be checked into the EU in Spain or France.

Animals arriving directly in Portugal from the UK by air will need to follow another process.

Animals arriving as cabin or hold checked baggage on the same flight as their owners, will disembark and be processed by the veterinary service and Customs in the passenger arrivals terminal building.

Animals arriving as cargo will be offloaded from the aircraft and transferred to the

cargo building, which is where they will get the veterinary check, Customs clearance and where you must go to collect them.

## THE AIRPORT VETERINARY CHECK

The **DGAV (Direção-Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária / General Directorate for Food and Veterinary Medicine)** information on the admission of cats and dogs to Portugal can be found here...

<https://www.dgav.pt/vaiviar/conteudo/animais-de-companhia/transito-internacional/entrada-em-portugal/caes-e-gatos/>

You must alert the airport veterinary services at least 48 hours in advance of the flight arrival time. The airline is not responsible for doing this. If this is not done there could be serious delays getting your animal released to you. You can do the notification online here...

<https://www.dgav.pt/vaiviar/conteudo/animais-de-companhia/transito-internacional/entrada-em-portugal/caes-e-gatos/aviso-de-chegada-como-fazer/>

You will find the link to the form (in English or Portuguese) that you need to complete to notify the veterinary service from the above link.

You can then email it to the specific veterinary service at the Portuguese airport your pet will be arriving at from the UK. Contact details here ...

<https://www.dgav.pt/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/PONTOS-DE-ENTRADA-DOS-VIAJANTES.pdf>

Also read the above links carefully for the airport veterinary service opening hours and costs.

### **Dangerous dog admission into Portugal**

As mentioned earlier if your dog is on the Portuguese dangerous breed (or crossbreed) list, you must complete the additional notification document and show proof of the sterility of the animal. See full requirements here:

<https://www.dgav.pt/vaiviar/conteudo/animais-de-companhia/transito-internacional/entrada-em-portugal/caes-de-racas-consideradas-potencialmente-perigosas/>

Notification form for a stay longer than 4 months:

<https://www.dgav.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Notificacao-de-Permanencia-09-03-2015.pdf>

## CUSTOMS CLEARANCE

Once you have completed the veterinary check, you will need to clear your animal through Customs. This used to be a simple procedure for owners to enter the cargo building after the flight has arrived, pay the Customs and warehouse handling fees, and leave with your animal.

However, since COVID 19 and the restriction of people entering the cargo building, it has now become the norm that an owner must pay an agent to handle Portuguese Customs clearance. Be very careful because there are quite a few rogue 'agents' that charge a small fortune to do this for unaware owners. They also may offer additional expensive 'services' like transporting your animal to your home. You can still collect your animal from outside the cargo building after has been cleared through Customs and take it home.

## ONCE YOUR PET IS HOME IN PORTUGAL

It is recommended you keep them in for a few days to get used to their new home and get over their travel experience. This particularly applies to cats who could get lost in completely unfamiliar outdoor surroundings.

Next, research your local veterinary services and make an appointment to visit a vet with your pet. Take your UK pet medical booklet so the vet can see the vaccination history, etc.

In the case of both dogs and cats, the vet must then read the microchip and **register the animal on the SIAC database**. Read more: <https://siac.vet/o-siac/>. This is a legal requirement in Portugal. If you move to a new house subsequently, you just need to ask your new vet to update the data in the system.

If you have a dog, it is a good idea to ask your new vet about **leishmaniasis** which is a potentially fatal disease prevalent in Portugal. The dog can undergo a series of vaccinations for this disease, but it does not confer complete immunity, so is not mandatory. This process will require a blood test to see if the dog has been previously exposed to leishmaniasis and then if not, a series of timed vaccinations.

**Heart worm** is another parasite prevalent in Portugal, so your dog should start taking anti-heart worm medication.

Your next stop should be at the local Parish Council office (Junta de Freguesia) to obtain an **annual dog licence**. This costs a few Euros and must be renewed annually.

The licence should be carried with you when out with your dog. In some areas, vets can also issue dog licences, but they are mostly obtained from a Junta de Freguesia

Some owners confuse registering the dog and the licencing of the dog. They are different and both need to be done.

Another important thing to be aware of in Portugal as a pet owner, is the presence of **pine processionary caterpillars**, particularly in rural, forested areas. They can cause extreme injury and fatality in dogs (and cats) if they come into close contact with them. They are none too good for humans either so be very cautious if dealing with them.

Dogs are particularly at risk because of their instinct to sniff new things and these caterpillars have an apparently 'inviting' scent for a dog to investigate. So, learn the time of year these caterpillars are very active, watch the ground where you and the dog walk and preferably keep the dog on a lead. Bear in mind, even if the dog inadvertently treads on a caterpillar, the hairs could transfer to the paws and the dog may subsequently lick its paws due to the irritation, hence it could affect the tongue, mouth with risk to the airway. Any contact or even suspicion of contact your dog has with these caterpillars, get to it the vet fast, as a matter of urgency.

In addition, fire salamanders and some toads can be very toxic to animals, necessitating urgent veterinary care.

More information about processionary caterpillar's lifecycle with pictures here:  
<https://web.cortland.edu/fitzgerald/pineprocessionary.html#Anti-Predator>

Veterinary article on the dangers, signs & symptoms of processionary caterpillars to pets:  
<http://veterinos.com/en/pine-processionary-caterpillars-a-danger-for-pets/>

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