

Before you apply for your Pet Passport and pack your bags, it is important to consider some of the diseases (other than rabies) that your dog or, less commonly, your cat may be at risk of while abroad.

Currently, the most important ones include:

- Heartworm
- Leishmaniasis
- Babesiosis
- Ehrlichiosis

Heartworm

Most prevalent in Southern France, Spain, Italy and the Mediterranean, the larvae of this worm (which eventually resides in the heart) are present in the blood stream and can be transferred to an unaffected dog via a mosquito bite.

Signs may take several years to manifest and include soft cough, tiredness, weakness, loss of weight and condition. Eventually heart failure may ensue. Once a month tablet or spot-on preparations are available in the UK and may be obtained from your vet prior to your trip, or from a local vet on arrival.

Leishmaniasis

Travelling to the Mediterranean might expose your pet to a severe, often fatal, disease called canine leishmaniasis.

Leishmaniasis is transferred from dog to dog by a microscopic parasite called *Leishmania infantum*, which is spread by sandfly bites. Dogs can be bitten up to 100 times an hour during the sandfly season, which begins in May and ends in September.

When an infected sandfly bites a dog, parasites are deposited in the skin. A tiny skin lesion – called a chancre – appears at the site of the bite, usually on the muzzle or ear. The parasite then invades the dog's cells, spreads into the internal organs and may begin to damage the immune system. Signs of the disease are highly variable and in some cases may take several years to manifest. Affected dogs may have a fever, show signs of hair loss (particularly around the eyes), lose weight and develop skin sores and nail disease. Unfortunately, over time, many organs may become involved leading to problems like anaemia, arthritis in many joints, eye and kidney disease. Treatment may be complex and often non curative, so prevention is best.

Babesiosis

Particularly prevalent in France, babesiosis is a serious tick-borne protozoal disease caused by a parasite, *Babesia* spp, which destroys red blood cells.

Signs include fever, anaemia, blood in the urine and jaundice. Susceptible dogs can die within a couple of days of the clinical signs appearing. British dogs are particularly vulnerable as they have never encountered the disease and therefore have no resistance.

It is vital to protect your dog from ticks and check its coat every day, while abroad and at home. If you can remove the ticks within a day of attachment, the disease can be prevented.

Ehrlichiosis

Ehrlichia is another tick-borne protozoal parasite. Infection with this parasite may cause anaemia, immunosuppression and compromise the blood's clotting ability. It is not considered as deadly as babesiosis and is particularly prevalent in the Mediterranean basin and the Rhone Valley. Signs include fever, severe depression, weight loss, anaemia, swollen glands and bleeding problems (eg: nose bleeds). It is vital to protect your dog from ticks, so check its coat every day.

Recommended Tick Treatments:

1. Use a tick hook to remove ticks on a daily basis.
2. Spot-on or spray preparations for dogs and cats, eg:
 - Advantix® for dogs (this is both repellent and acaricidal). **NB: do not use in cats.**
 - Frontline® Spray (acaricidal only). Can be used in both dogs and cats.
3. Scalibor® collars for dogs (can be used in conjunction with Frontline).
4. Spray car/house with Acclaim®.

Do not remove ticks using fingers or tweezers!

(See EVG tick leaflet.)

Sandfly Protection:

1. Scalibor® collar for dogs (lasts five to six months).
2. Advantix® Spot-On for dogs (last two weeks).
3. Keep animals indoors from dusk to dawn.

Heartworm:

Advocate®.

Websites:

Further information can be found on the following websites:

www.defra.gov.uk

www.scalibor.co.uk

Please remember to take out health insurance for your pet while abroad.

Please speak to a veterinary surgeon if you require any further advice or information.



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Quick Reference Guide



Endell Veterinary Group

49 Endless Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 3UH

Tel: 01722-333291 Fax: 01722-338778

www.endellveterinarygroup.co.uk