



BREXIT - THE IMPACT ON ANIMALS AND YOUR PETS

HANDY GUIDE

Introduction

As the UK is preparing for withdrawal from the EU, much of the discussion is about issues that can seem rather abstract: new customs arrangements, the form of future trade agreements, and judicial cooperation, to name just a few. But Brexit does not only affect businesses or UK citizens living as far as [Gibraltar](#) or on either side of the Irish border: indeed, every UK citizen owning a pet could experience the consequences of Brexit on a very personal level. For pet-owners the four freedoms provided for by the European single market (people, services, goods, money), include another important aspect: the free movement of pets. Although all kinds of pet animals are transported by their owners, three species are subject to special legislation, the reason being that they are especially susceptible to rabies: dogs, cats and ferrets (the latter for all Last of the Summer Wine fans). Travelling or moving with your dog, cat or ferret (you would be surprised) is currently regulated mainly by EU laws. How will Brexit affect UK citizens and 'man's best friend'? The movement of horses is governed by a different set of rules focused on whether transport is for breeding, sport or slaughter. Will we need to hold our horses after Brexit?

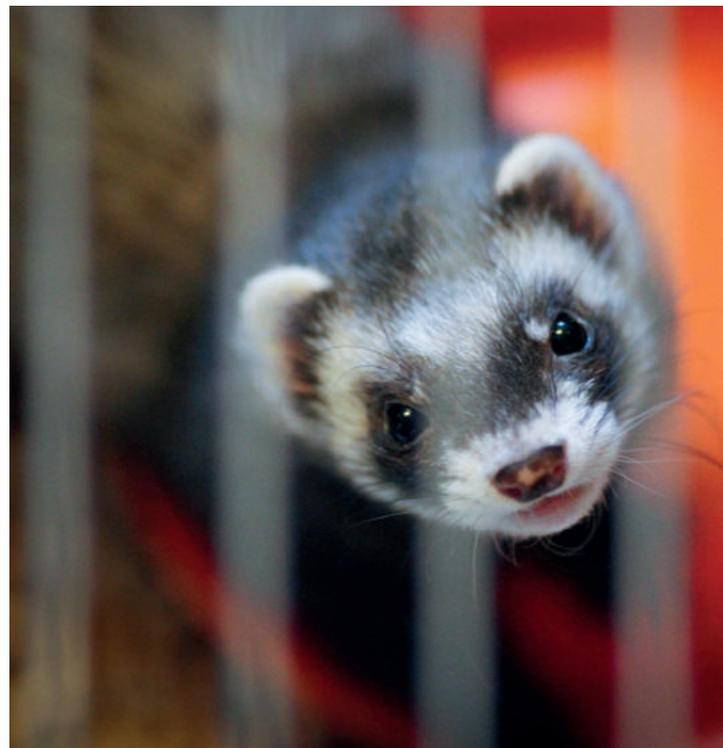
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Travelling with pets

Under EU law, travelling with a dog, cat or ferret within the EU is quite straightforward: in addition to having it microchipped (proof of identity), a valid European pet passport is required, issued by an authorised vet and containing details of a valid anti-rabies vaccination. For animals less than 12-16 weeks old (which will not normally have been vaccinated), and for pets other than dogs, cats or ferrets, national rules apply. If the animal is taken into Finland, Norway, Ireland, Malta or indeed the UK, it must also be treated against the tapeworm *Echinococcus*. Apart from these requirements, which are mainly for health and safety reasons, pets like dogs, cats and ferrets can move freely within the EU, travelling or moving with their owners. However failure to comply with the rules can lead to a pet quarantine for up to four months.

Dogs, cats, and ferrets travelling to the EU from a non-EU country must meet the same minimum conditions: proof of identity, usually through microchipping, and a valid identity document containing health details. This animal health certificate contains information on treatments, especially on rabies vaccination and must be accompanied by a written declaration completed by the pet's owner regarding the non-commercial nature of the movement. Depending on the third country's rabies status, there can be additional requirements to be met: in general a rabies antibody blood test carried out after vaccination, as well as a treatment against the tapeworm when entering the EU via the UK or any of the other listed countries. Again, failure to comply with these requirements usually leads to a pet quarantine for up to four months. Because imported animals present a high risk of transmission of disease, every dog entering the EU is subject to specific border controls by a so called Veterinary Border Inspection Post.

We know that it is impossible to predict with certainty every detail of a post-Brexit future. However given that the only real differences for pets travelling within and into the EU is an additional blood test and border control, the UK's future 'third country' status after Brexit should not be a major issue. In particular, the worry that British Expat dogs living in an EU Member State will have to go into quarantine every time the owner visits the family back home, does not appear to be justified.



Legal trading with pets and illegal puppy trade

The travel requirements described above apply to non-commercial transport of dogs, cats and ferrets. There are additional strict requirements at EU level for the commercial transport of pet animals. For example: the animal must come only from a listed country and a registered establishment, the pet must have undergone a clinical examination within 48 hours prior to transport and it must be accompanied by a valid animal health certificate and a valid entry document issued by the Border Inspection Post.

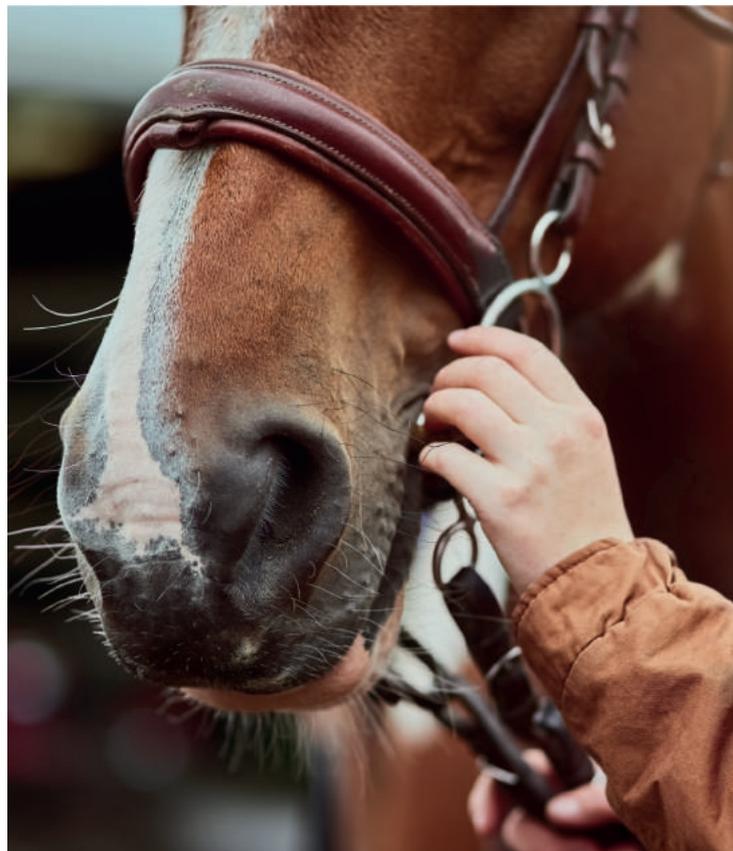
One specific element of trade in pet animals increasingly makes the headlines: puppy trade or puppy farming which, despite being illegal in the UK, continues to be of value to traders. According to a [recent report](#) the value of the puppy trade in Scotland alone is estimated to be £13 million per year. Although many of the puppies have been bred within the UK and are therefore not subject to import/export rules, there has been a significant increase in the number of puppies entering the UK in recent years. The report casts doubt on the effectiveness of border checks on preventing illegal puppy trade. In addition, the House of Commons issued a report in 2016 suggesting reform of the [current animal passport scheme](#). The abuse of the current EU system (especially fraudulent pet passports) leads some to regard Brexit as being potentially positive in terms of imposing effective checks on the [movements of animals](#): the withdrawal from the EU could present an opportunity to review and amend the UK legal requirements for import/export.

Horses and Brexit

Although the number of horses in the EU (6 - 7 million) and the UK (under 1 million) is way below the number of dogs (8.5 million in the UK alone), horses are much more mobile and, in many cases, horses can be of significant financial value. Movement of horses within and from outside the EU has to take into account the potential spreading of equine infectious diseases, equivalent to the compulsory rabies vaccination for dogs. Horses destined to 'travel' within the EU must have an identification document (passport) with information on the health status or, if not registered, a special veterinary certificate. Horses can only be moved within the EU if they come from areas free of African horse sickness and other major equine diseases, such as glanders, dourine, equine infectious anaemia and any type of equine encephalomyelitis.

Intra-EU transport of horses, be it for breeding, sport or slaughter, requires a special export health certificate and potentially an export welfare declaration; for transport between the UK, the Republic of Ireland, and France, a Tripartite Agreement allows for some relaxation of the procedures required under the respective EU laws, but only for the purposes of equestrian sports. Horse imports from a non-EU or 'third country' (which we expect the UK to be from 29 March 2019) is restricted to a list of authorised countries based on the country's freedom from equine diseases such as the African horse sickness. Any import from outside the EU must meet the European health and safety requirements and can be subject to additional residence, quarantine, test and vaccination requirements. Horses entering the EU are subject to specific controls at a Veterinary Border Inspection Post.

With Brexit, transport of horses between the UK and the EU will likely become more onerous than before, and, like dogs, horses are not a priority in the Brexit negotiations. However, horse trade and transportation is a lucrative business, especially in the transport triangle of France, the Republic of Ireland and the UK.



Outlook

The movement of pets and horses is of course not a top priority in Brexit negotiations, despite the number of UK citizens affected: approximately one in two British households own a pet, including around 8.5 million dogs, and there are around half a million horse-owning households and over 19 million equestrian consumers in the UK. Travelling with a dog (e.g. holidays, home visits, adoption) and moving horses (e.g. for competitions or breeding purposes) between the UK and the EU, once the UK has become a third country as of 29 March 2019, will probably be subject to additional health checks and border controls. However, prospective changes seem to be moderate. It will remain important to check the national rules of the country of destination before travelling with a pet or transporting a horse. When it comes to trade, and importantly fighting against illegal pet farming, the UK's withdrawal from the EU might have a positive, law-reforming effect for the UK. It remains important, however, to keep an eye on developments and to make sure that exiting the EU does not lead to gaps in legislation.

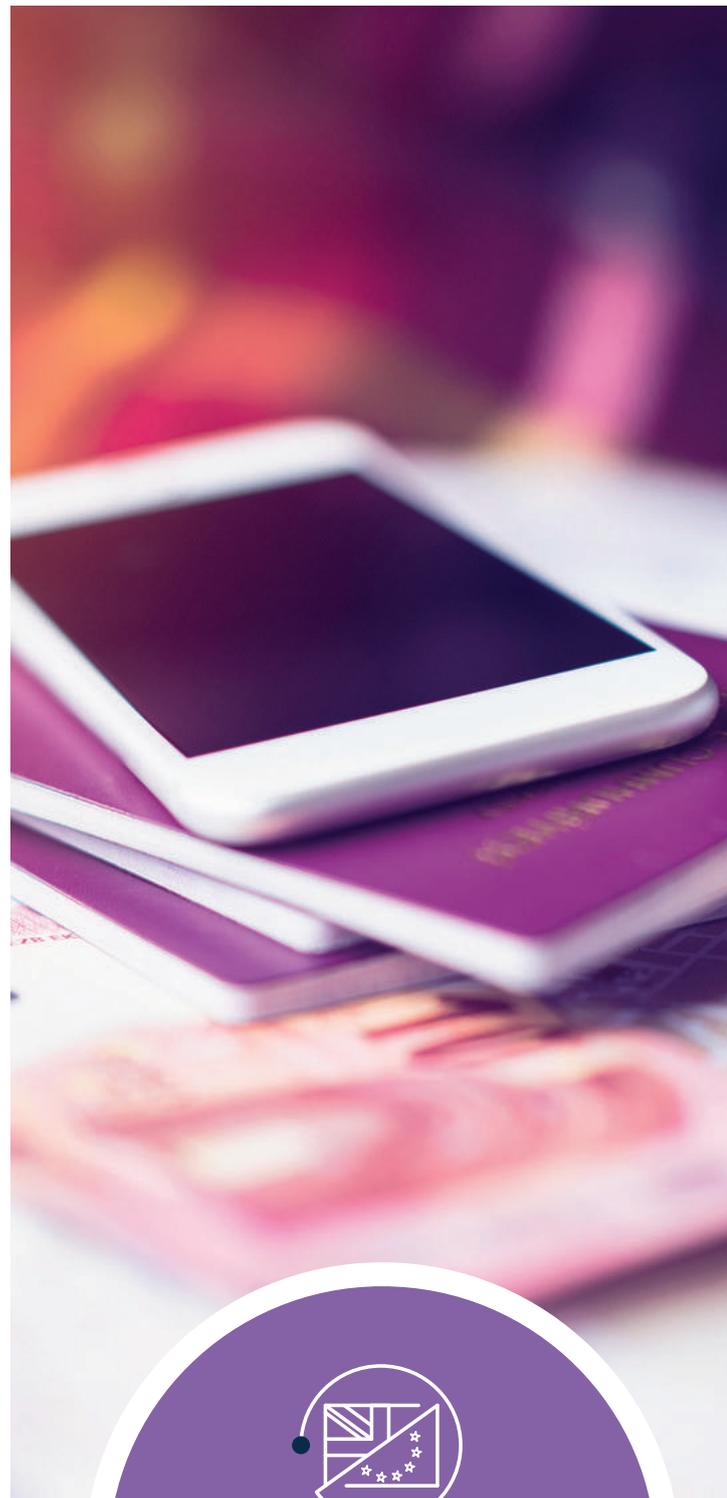
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