POLICY NOTE

THE NON-COMMERCIAL MOVEMENT OF PET ANIMALS (SCOTLAND) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2022

SSI 2022/131

The above instrument was made in exercise of the powers conferred by Articles 38 and 39(6) of Regulation (EU) 576/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the non-commercial movement of pet animals. The instrument is subject to negative procedure.

Summary Box

To permit until 1 October 2022, an alternative, quicker rabies antibody titration test for the movement of pet animals into Scotland and release from quarantine, given the unprecedented number of pet animals expected to accompany persons displaced by the conflict in Ukraine.

Policy Objectives

These Regulations have been made to address a shortage of quarantine places to accommodate pet animals accompanying people fleeing Ukraine and amends retained direct EU legislation to authorise the use of an additional rabies antibody titre test for pet animals entering Scotland. Permitting the use of an additional test will significantly speed up the rabies testing process for pet animals entering Scotland at a time when the system faces a significant backlog due to pet animals entering with their owners fleeing from Ukraine. This will reduce the overall burden on quarantine spaces and enable people being reunited with their pets earlier, while also protecting public health.

At present Ukraine is currently an unlisted (high rabies risk) country in terms of pet travel. Annually there are about 1,800 rabies recorded cases in animals in Ukraine, of which more than half are observed in pet dogs and cats and livestock and the others in wildlife and sporadic cases in humans have been registered despite preventive measures. The existing entry requirements for pets (cats, dogs and ferrets) to enter Great Britain directly from Ukraine under the PET Travel Scheme rules are that they are required to:

i. be microchipped;
ii. have a valid rabies vaccination by an authorised vet after they are 12 weeks old;
iii. pass a post-vaccination rabies titre test at least 30 days after the vaccination; and
iv. to wait a further three months before entering Great Britain.

In the case of dogs, they are treated for Echinococcus multilocularis (tapeworm) with an approved product not less than 24 hours and not more than 120 hours prior to arrival in GB. This must be evidenced in the pet passport or health certificate.

As part of the current rabies requirements for Ukrainian animals entering Great Britain, there is one type of antibody titre test that can be used for entry into Great Britain and to authorise the release from quarantine if the animal is non-compliant on entry. This test (the *Fluorescent* Antibody *Virus Neutralisation (FAVN) test*[1])) is currently used for the 30 day titre test and

[1] Fluorescent Antibody Virus Neutralisation (FAVN) Tests (defra.gov.uk)

has a turnaround time of up to two weeks. These Regulations give Scottish Ministers the ability, for a time limited period (to 1 October 2022) to authorise an alternative antibody titre test (a specific form of an *enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) test*), which has a turnaround of 2-3 days.

The ELISA test however does not currently meet the requirements set out in Annex 4 to the Pet Travel Regulation (retained Regulation (EU) 576/2013), as it does not detect neutralising antibodies which the current testing requirements require. However, APHA national reference laboratory experts and veterinary colleagues have advised that the ELISA test could be relied on to satisfy ourselves quickly that the pet is vaccinated and has a sufficient level of protection against the rabies virus. These Regulations would apply to the use of ELISA tests that have met the validation criteria of the OIE biological standards committee.

The changes that would be made by these Regulations will enable Scottish Minister to take this alternative, quicker option to enable pets to be removed from quarantine, or to be placed in the most appropriate quarantine facilities for that animal. This will ultimately reduce the overall burden on quarantine spaces and enable people being reunited with their pets earlier than if they went through the full quarantine process.

Consultation

As required by Article 39(7) of the Pet Travel Regulations Defra undertook a GB-wide consultation exercise and consulted the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), devolved administrations and members of the GB Exotic Disease Core Group for Rabies, which includes those representing the interests of veterinarians, pet charities and public health bodies. These consultees were in agreement on the deployment of the ELISA test to relieve pressure on quarantine facilities.

Impact Assessments

No significant, impact on the private, voluntary or public sector is foreseen

Financial Effects

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands confirms that no BRIA is necessary as the instrument has no financial effects on the Scottish Government, local government or on business.

Scottish Government
Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate

8 April 2022