

www.defra.gov.uk

Consultation on veterinary border checks on rabies-susceptible animals

April 2009

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
Telephone 020 7238 6000
Website: www.defra.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009
Copyright in the typographical arrangement and design rests with the Crown.

This publication (excluding the royal arms and departmental logos) may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as crown copyright and the title of the publication specified.

Information about this publication and further copies are available from:

Defra
Global Animal Health
Area 4B
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

Email: IAH-Imports@defra.gsi.gov.uk

This document is available on the Defra website:
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/rabies/index.htm>

Published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

1. The scope of our review

1.1 We are reviewing the import checks on rabies-susceptible animals commercially imported from countries outside the EU. The review covers certain animals currently listed in the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974 (as amended) (Rabies Order). It will apply to commercial consignments, rabies susceptible animals entering quarantine, and unaccompanied pets entering under the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS). Commercial consignments are animals imported for the pet trade or private sale, animals destined for zoos and animals destined for laboratories. It does not cover accompanied pets or animals which are commercially imported from another country in the EU, Norway or Switzerland.

1.2 The review is only looking at entry checks. The review will not be considering the import conditions such as pre-export requirements, certification, controls on movement to destination or quarantine requirements. These are being considered separately in Defra's review of the UK's rabies import control policy.

2. Background

2.1 Commercial imports and non-PETS compliant pet animals are currently imported in accordance with the Rabies Order. This order requires the import of rabies-susceptible mammals to be licensed for entry into the UK at one of several specified entry points (and thereafter to be moved by an approved carrying agent to an authorised quarantine premises where they are held for 6 months). The main exception to this regime is the import of laboratory rodents which, while still imported under a rabies import licence when coming from third countries, may not be required to undergo 6 months quarantine if they comply with certain conditions.

2.2 EU law also places import requirements on commercial imports of rabies-susceptible mammals. Council Directive 92/65/EC lays down EU import requirements for various animals including rabies-susceptible animals. This Directive allows the UK to continue with its own import regime. We decided that we would use this derogation and continued to license imports under the Rabies Order under stricter conditions than are generally applied across the rest of the EU. The EU has also adopted the European Regulation (EC) 998/2003 on the animal health requirements for the non-commercial movement of pet animals. This introduced controls on the movement of pet animals both intra-Community and into the Community from third countries.

2.3 In addition to Directive 92/65 and Regulation 998/2003 which lay down import conditions for imported rabies-susceptible animals, Council Directive 91/496 requires Member States to check animals imported from third countries at the point of entry into the Community territory: these checks should be carried out immediately when the animals land at specially approved facilities called border inspection posts (BIPs). The Directive applies to all live animals **except** accompanied pets.

2.4 Current rabies import controls do not require rabies-susceptible animals imported from outside the EU to be checked on entry as they are checked at the quarantine premises (kennels, zoos or laboratories) specified on the import licence where the animals can be held in secure facilities whilst the checks are carried out. The animals are transported in a secure transport container by specifically approved carriers and are subject to veterinary inspection on arrival at those premises. In our opinion this provides equivalent animal health protection. We believed that the derogation provided in Council Directive 92/65/EC enabled us to do this.

3. Why we need to review our policy

3.1 The UK controls on imported animals have been audited by the Food and Veterinary Office of the European Commission (FVO). During the mission the FVO looked at our controls on rabies-susceptible animals. The FVO felt that the derogation in Council Directive 92/65/EC only applied to import conditions (certification and post-import quarantine) and did not allow us to exempt unaccompanied pets and commercial consignments of rabies-susceptible animals from the veterinary (BIP) check required under Council Directive 91/496/EC.

4. Options for future policy

4.1 We believe that there are 3 possible approaches for future imports:

1. We continue with our current policy. Consignments destined for quarantine are checked at destination and are exempt from veterinary checks on entry into the UK.
2. Consignments of animals destined for laboratories are checked at destination but consignments destined for the pet trade or for zoos will be checked at a BIP.
3. Animal Health inspects all commercial consignment of rabies-susceptible animals on entry into the UK at an approved border inspection post. Imports at designated entry points not approved as a BIP would no longer be permitted.

5. Option 1: Check all rabies-susceptible animals at destination

For

- 5.1 The procedure for imports is established and has been in place for many years. Commercial importers have a good understanding of the associated costs. If we do not make any changes to the import controls, there will be no financial impact on importers.
- 5.2 The current procedures have provided robust and effective protection for the UK from rabies. Animals are transported from the point of entry in the UK to the point of inland destination in very secure conditions which prevent the release of animals which have not undergone the required quarantine period.

- 5.3 Under the Rabies Order animals are transported directly to destination where they will be checked by a veterinary superintendent or a supervisor and vaccinated for rabies if required. Animals therefore are inspected on entry but not at a BIP.
- 5.4 There are more points of entry approved under the Rabies Order than approved as BIPs, but the conditions of approval for rabies points of entry are minimal compared to those for a BIP. The importers will have greater flexibility in the transport routes if we maintain the current system. The current list of approved ports/airports of entry already have facilities to handle imports under the Rabies Order and will not need to upgrade their facilities.
- 5.5 Currently animals are checked at destination by experienced staff. They have been trained to deal with animals which potentially may be infected with the rabies virus. They are aware of the health and safety risks and are able to protect themselves and other around them from any risk. However BIP staff are also experienced in inspecting animals and will have undergone training on health and safety aspects of handling animals and additional training on handling animals which may have rabies can be arranged. BIP staff are already vaccinated against rabies.

Against

- 5.6 We have received advice from the European Commission that our current procedures do not meet the EU requirements and that there is no derogation from veterinary checks at the BIP. It is important that we do fulfill the requirements of EU law. The European Commission may take legal action against the UK if we do not meet EU rules. Animal health matters and import controls are very important to the UK. Whilst we believe that our current controls provide equivalent protection, our actions may be misinterpreted by others if we continue to defer checks.
- 5.7 If the animals are not checked on entry but at destination there is a risk that an animal that is not fit to travel will continue to destination. If animals are checked on entry, sick or distressed animals may be treated immediately rather than at destination. Animal Health could also require an animal to rest at the BIP or be transferred to another transport container before it continued with its journey.

6. Option 2: Check laboratory animals at destination

For

- 6.1 The laboratory trade faces greater security risks than importers of pets or zoo animals. As mentioned above, the current procedures have been in place for many years and have proved to be robust from

both an animal health and security point of view. However we believe that the veterinary checks regime will provide equivalent security .

- 6.2 Laboratory animals are sometimes transported in conditions which ensure that they are free from certain viruses and pathogens. If the animals are released from these environmentally controlled conditions they will not be able to be used for the research.
- 6.3 Animals are checked by officers who are aware of the health and safety risks and are able to protect themselves and others around them from any risk.

Against

- 6.4 The arguments against adopting this approach are as detailed for the other options above but each of these would apply to fewer animals.
- 6.5 The incentive to invest in new facilities would be further reduced.
- 6.6 We believe that it is possible to maintain the health status and security of laboratory animals if checked at a BIP. Laboratory animal boxes would not need to be opened as long as they have been packed in accordance with welfare in transport regulations. These require that, for Specific Pathogen Free animals, there must be viewing panels so the animals may be checked on arrival without opening the boxes. If all such animals have a vet check at the BIP this will allow Animal Health to check that the welfare conditions during transport have been acceptable.

7. Option 3: Check all imports of rabies-susceptible animals at BIPs

For

- 7.1 If we adopted this approach it would satisfy the FVO that the UK is complying with EU rules for imports of animals.
- 7.2 As the checks are carried out immediately upon entry any problems can be addressed straightaway. Animal Health could, if required, treat an animal, require it to be rested, fed or watered or to be transferred to another container.
- 7.3 As all animals will be required to go to a BIP rather than remain in the Temporary Animal Holding facilities approved under the Rabies Order, this should result in an improvement in their welfare, particularly for cats and dogs as they would be released from their boxes on arrival at the BIP instead of staying in them until released at the quarantine premises which may be several hours.
- 7.4 If a problem arises with CITES certification and the consignment is held at the border, there are facilities to hold the animal until this has been resolved.

- 7.5 At the moment HMRC and animal importers deal with two different regimes: veterinary checks and the rabies order. If the veterinary checks regime was extended to cover rabies-susceptible animals, Customs and animal importers will use the same procedures to clear all commercial consignments of animals on entry. This should simplify the system and avoid any potential confusion over dealing with the different regimes.

Against

- 7.6 Consignments must be imported through an approved Border Inspection Post (BIP). At the moment there are only 2 BIPs in the UK that can accept consignments of other rabies-susceptible animals: Heathrow Airport and Gatwick Airport. There are no BIPs approved for these animals in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland or at any seaport. Consignments will need to be landed and checked at one of these designated BIPs in England and subsequently travel to final destination. Animals could also be landed and checked at a BIP in another country in the EU as a first point of entry to the Community and then moved to the UK via any port or airport approved under the Rabies Order. This may add to an importer's transport costs.
- 7.7 As a result of adopting this option, there is likely to be an increase in journey time. A longer journey with additional transfers between different modes of transport may also increase the stress for some animals. This is likely to lead to a small increase in the carbon footprint of the journey.
- 7.8 Although other airports can upgrade to be approved, considerable investment might be required and a cost benefit analysis of low throughput trade may not justify this investment.
- 7.9 There are no BIPs approved in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland for rabies-susceptible animals, any location can upgrade and apply to be approved for this purpose, although a significant investment in the necessary facilities would be required.

8. What is a veterinary check?

8.1 The BIP must have 24 working hours pre-notification of the arrival of the consignment so that staff are available to carry out the inspection. This is done by a special form called a Common Veterinary Entry Document (CVEDA). Preferably the CVEDA is completed on the TRACES system (an EU web-based system). A model CVEDA is provided in Commission Regulation 585/2004.

8.2 On arrival the animals are taken straight to the BIP where a veterinary officer will check the paperwork which accompanies the animals to ensure that it meets the UK's import requirements (a documentary check). The vet will then carry out an identity check to ensure that the animals match the description on the paperwork and will also do a physical check where the vet

will check to ensure that the animals are fit and healthy and that their welfare has not been compromised during the journey.

8.3 When the check has been carried out the vet completes the CVEDA with the results of the check. If the consignment meets the import conditions the vet will send a copy of the CVEDA to Customs to allow them to release the consignment. The importer must pay for the cost of the check before the CVEDA is completed.

8.4 In the UK these checks are carried out by Animal Health. The BIP facilities are provided by private companies, usually the port or airport operator. In the UK there are only 2 BIPs which can inspect rabies-susceptible animals. They are Heathrow Airport and Gatwick Airport.

9. Financial consequences

9.1 Importers must pay for the cost of the veterinary check. The charge is set in [The Animals \(Third Country Imports\) \(Charges\) Regulations 1997](#), amongst other things the charge includes veterinary costs, costs for equipment and services. The charges are however under review and are likely to increase when the review is concluded. In addition to this fee the operators of the BIP may charge a handling and transport fee for using the BIP.

9.2 Most rabies ports of entry are not approved BIPs for rabies-susceptible animals. To upgrade facilities so that they may continue to accept consignments of third country rabies-susceptible animals will require considerable financial investment.

10. Timescale for any changes

10.1 If following the consultation we decide that it is necessary for animals to enter via a border inspection post, we must draw up an implementation plan. We will have to provide a transitional period, probably one year, where importers may still use the full list of entry points in the Rabies Order. If the entry points have not provided BIP facilities by that time, imports will not subsequently be permitted through that port or airport. This would have to be undertaken in conjunction with a review to the Rabies Order.

11. What implementing EU law will mean for importers

11.1 People bringing in accompanied family pets (cats, dogs and ferrets) which comply with the PETS regime will not be affected – pets accompanied by their owners which meet the requirements of the pets regime are exempt from veterinary checks so they can continue to be imported through any of the current points of entry and will not need to be checked on entry.

11.2 Unaccompanied PETS compliant pet dogs, cats and ferrets will be affected – the animal(s) will need to be checked at the border at an approved BIP.

- 11.3 People bringing in unaccompanied family pets (cats, dogs and ferrets) which do not meet the requirements of the PETS scheme will be affected – the animal(s) will need to be checked at the border at an approved BIP. The cost of the check will be recovered from the owner or their agent. The pet will need to undergo quarantine under the Rabies Order.
- 11.4 People bringing in pets for retail sale or commercial purposes – the animal(s) will need to be checked at the border at an approved BIP. The cost of the check will be recovered from the owner or their agent. The animal(s) will then need to undergo quarantine under the Rabies Order.
- 11.5 People bringing in animals for zoos - the animal(s) will need to be checked at the border at an approved BIP. The cost of the check will be recovered from the owner or their agent. The animal(s) will need to undergo quarantine under the Rabies Order.
- 11.6 People bringing in animals for laboratories - the animal(s) will need to be checked at the border at an approved BIP. The cost of the check will be recovered from the owner or their agent. The animal(s) may need to undergo quarantine under the Rabies Order. However, if they meet the conditions of the import licence they would be exempt from quarantine.

14. Your views

14.1 We would be grateful for your comments on:-

- a) Positive and negative impacts on your business/organisation of each option
- b) Any additional impacts not described included in this consultation paper
- c) Your preferred option.

14.2 Comments should be sent by 20 July 2009 to

IAH-Imports@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Or by post to:

Rabies susceptible animal checks consultation
Global Animal Health Team
Area 4B
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR