

REVISION OF SINGAPORE'S IMPORT REQUIREMENTS FOR DOGS AND CATS

Background

1. Currently, only dogs and cats from four countries, namely Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Ireland, are exempted from the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA)'s quarantine requirements. Dogs and cats from all other countries are required to be vaccinated against rabies, upon arrival in Singapore and subject to 30-day quarantine at Sembawang Animal Quarantine Station (SAQS).

2. The AVA adopted a risk management approach when reviewing the current import requirements for dogs and cats to determine whether any of the dogs and cats may be exempted from quarantine, when they are imported into Singapore. The basis for removing the quarantine requirement is applicable as follows:

2.1. Dogs and cats originating from countries/regions free from rabies or have low rabies incidence and/or shown to have effective rabies control within the countries/regions.

2.2 The use of safe and effective inactivated rabies vaccines.

2.3 The use of microchip to identify individual animals.

2.4 The reliability of rabies antibody serology to demonstrate protection in the dogs and cats.

3. In this review, the AVA has taken into consideration the OIE guidelines, the UK Pet Travel Scheme as well as the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) "Assessment of the risk of rabies introduction into the UK, Ireland, Sweden, Malta, as a consequence of abandoning the serological test measuring protective antibodies to rabies", adopted by the Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) on 11 December 2006. The AVA's International Advisory Committee of Experts had also provided advice during the review process and endorsed the approach in mitigating risk of introducing rabies into Singapore.

Risk Categorisation of Countries/Regions

4. Countries/regions are categorised according to the rabies risk posed by different countries. A questionnaire had earlier been sent to various countries/regions so as to assess the risk posed by individual country/region. The questionnaire (Annex A) includes information, such as:

4.1 Prevalence and incidence of rabies in animals and humans in the past 5 years.

4.2 Veterinary infrastructure

4.3 Animal health regulations specifically on rabies e.g. contingency plans, control programmes, import policy

5. The new categorisation is as follows:
- 5.1 Category A (countries traditionally free from rabies, namely Australia, United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand);
 - 5.2 Category B (countries with negligible risk of rabies),
 - 5.3 Category C (countries with controlled risk, or with low incidence of rabies); and
 - 5.4 Category D (other countries, undetermined risk).
6. There will be no quarantine requirements for countries listed in Categories A and B, although countries listed in Category B will need to fulfill pre-export residency, and rabies vaccination and testing requirements. For countries in Category C, two options are available; and the quarantine period will either be reduced to 10 days, or remain at 30 days, depending on the option chosen. For countries listed in Category D, the quarantine period remains at 30 days and the dog/cat will be vaccinated against rabies upon arrival in Singapore. The details of the risk mitigation measures for respective categories are attached as Annex B.
7. Fourteen countries/regions had provided information and the preliminary categorisation of these countries and regions are as follows:

Category A

Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Ireland (no change)

Category B

Italy, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, USA (Hawaii and Guam only)

Category C

USA (except Hawaii and Guam), Canada, Belgium, Netherlands and Spain

Category D

South Korea

Implementation

8. A WTO notification has been made on 1 April 2009 and the adoption of the requirements is targeted to be 1 July 2009. The entry into force of the requirements will be on 1 January 2010, so that eligible animals can make preparation to meet the requirements. Countries/regions, which have not been categorised in paragraph 7 above, are invited to submit a response to the questionnaire in Annex A for the purpose of risk assessment and categorisation. Countries which do not submit a request for risk assessment and categorisation will automatically be placed under Category D.

**AGRI-FOOD AND VETERINARY AUTHORITY (AVA) QUESTIONNAIRE
CONCERNING NATIONAL RABIES CONTROL**

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) of Singapore has prepared the following list of questions to assess the rabies situation in countries wishing to export animals to Singapore. The questions are meant to help the AVA to establish whether a country is rabies free or where rabies is well controlled. This would enable Singapore to consider whether to waive quarantine for import of pet animals.

Please answer the questions in detail to help the AVA reach a decision in the matter. This would help pet owners who want to travel to Singapore with their pets.

1. Is rabies a notifiable disease in your country and is it compulsory to report all rabies cases?
2. Does your country have an established surveillance system for rabies? If yes, please briefly describe the system, outline the capabilities of the laboratory and any accreditation that it has achieved as well as provide the results for the past five years.
3. Does your country have a contingency plan in a case of rabies suspicion? If yes, please briefly outline the contingency plan, including the reporting structure in a case of rabies suspicion.
4. Has there been any case of rabies in wild animals within the country during the past five years? If yes, how many cases were reported? What were the strains of the rabies virus?
5. Has there been any case of rabies in domestic animals within the country during the past five years? If yes, how many cases were reported? What were the strains of the rabies virus?
6. Has there been any case of dog or cat rabies within the country over the past five years? If yes, how many cases were reported? What were the strains of the rabies virus?

7. What are the measures imposed by your authorities, if there is animal bite incident, involving domestic animals, especially when the “biter” is suspected to be rabid?
8. Does your country have a control program for wild animal rabies? If yes, please briefly outline the program.
9. What are the measures (e.g. verification of health certificate and rabies vaccination) for the border inspection for dogs and cats?
10. What is the vaccination protocol for dogs and cats in your country? Does your country use live or inactivated vaccine?
11. Is it compulsory to vaccinate all dogs and cats in your country against rabies? If yes, what are the specifications of the vaccine used?
12. What are the import regulations (e.g. quarantine period, vaccination against rabies, microchipping and blood test for rabies antibodies level) for dogs and cats?
13. What are the current quarantine protocol and requirements?
14. Please provide an estimate of the total populations of dogs and cats (feral and domesticated) in your country?
15. What is the system of traceability for dogs and cats in your country?
16. What is the legislation in place to control rabies in your country?
17. Has there been any rabies case in humans (from dogs and cats) over the past five years? If there were, was there investigation to trace the source?

- 18.** Are there laboratory capabilities within your country to perform rabies serology? Please provide name and address of the laboratories and type of tests performed? Are the laboratories accredited for the test?
- 19.** If there are no laboratory capabilities to perform rabies serology, where are blood samples sent?
- 20.** Are there measures and procedures enforced in your country to ensure that blood samples sent to laboratories are correctly identified to the animal of origin?

The AVA is grateful for your help and co-operation. The AVA would also appreciate it if we could refer back to you if we need to seek any clarification to your answers.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions!

Yours Sincerely,

Import and Export Division
Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority

Annex B

Condition	Cat A	Cat B	Cat C1 Animals with prior vaccination	Cat C2 Animals with prior vaccination	Cat D
6 month continuous residency or since birth in the country/region of that category or higher	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Pre-export Vaccination	NA	Vaccinate at least 1 month prior to export (This could be a primary vaccination OR part of a valid vaccination programme ¹)	Vaccinate at least 4 months prior to export (This could be a primary vaccination OR part of a valid vaccination programme ¹) Following the date of sampling for serology (as described below), administer an additional rabies vaccination at least 1 month prior to export.	Vaccinate at least 3 months prior to export (This could be a primary vaccination OR part of a valid vaccination programme ¹)	Vaccinate at least 6 months prior to export (This could be a primary vaccination OR part of a valid vaccination programme ¹)
Pre-export Serology ²	NA	Serology at least 1 month after vaccination	Serology at least 1 month after vaccination, prior to additional vaccination and within 6 months prior to export	Serology at least 1 month after vaccination and within 6 months prior to export	Serology at least 1 month after vaccination and within 6 months prior to export
Post arrival vaccination	NA	NA	NA	NA	Vaccinate
Post arrival Quarantine	NA	NA	10 days	30 days	30 days

¹ Valid vaccination programme refers to a primary vaccination and/or an up to date booster according to the vaccine manufacturer's recommendation.

² Titre must be at least 0.5 IU. The dog/cat must have a blood sample taken and tested for acceptable rabies antibody levels after vaccination. Following the date of sampling for serology, the dog/cat must maintain valid vaccination against rabies.

Condition	Cat A	Cat B	Cat C1 Animals with prior vaccination	Cat C2 Animals with prior vaccination	Cat D
Non-compliance (does not meet residency requirement)	Quarantine to meet shortfall in residency requirement				
Non-compliance (does not meet pre-export vaccination requirement)	NA	Vaccinate upon arrival and serology ² 1 month after vaccination and quarantine animal until the results are out	Vaccinate upon arrival and serology ² 1 month after vaccination and quarantine for 120 days	Vaccinate upon arrival and serology ² 1 month after vaccination and quarantine for 120 days	Vaccinate upon arrival and serology ² 1 month after vaccination and quarantine for 180 days
Non-compliance (does not meet serology ² requirement)	NA	Serology upon arrival and quarantine until satisfactory titre results are out	Serology upon arrival and quarantine for 10 days or until satisfactory serology results are out, whichever is later The animal may be returned to the country of export if the serology test results do not meet AVA's requirements.	Serology upon arrival and quarantine for 30 days or until satisfactory serology results are out, whichever is later The animal may be returned to the country of export if the serology test results do not meet AVA's requirements.	Serology upon arrival and quarantine for 30 days or until satisfactory serology results are out, whichever is later The animal may be returned to the country of export if the serology test results do not meet AVA's requirements.