



## EXOTIC DISEASE FACTSHEET

If you intend to travel within Europe with your pet these are the diseases you need to protect them against. This protection is best achieved by a combination of preventing exposure (by avoiding certain areas or keeping your pet indoors at certain times of day, removing ticks if they attach to your pet and using fly and tick repellents regularly ) and in some cases using vaccination or drug treatment to prevent disease if exposure occurs. As with any preventative healthcare program you can never reduce the risk to zero, but with our advice we can help you make your pet's holiday as safe as possible.

### DISEASES SPREAD BY TICKS

- **Babesiosis** affects dogs causing severe anaemia, high fever and jaundice. It can be rapidly fatal.
- **Ehrlichiosis** also affects dogs causing varied symptoms including fever, depression, bleeding from eyes and nose, swollen glands, severe eye disease, lameness and can become chronic causing weight loss and debility. It can be fatal.
- **Borreliosis (Lyme Disease)** affects dogs and also humans. It causes fever, lethargy, joint, heart and kidney disease and can progress to neurological signs and death.

These diseases are present throughout Europe and any dog travelling within Europe should be protected from exposure to tick bites to help prevent infection. Lyme disease is already present in the UK (although the risk is higher in mainland Europe) and tick prevention is vital if travelling to areas such as New Forest, Lake District and Scotland. Ticks that bite your dog could potentially bite you too and infect you with Lyme Disease, so take every precaution to avoid and kill ticks. Babesiosis is becoming established in the southern UK after it has been imported by dogs that have travelled abroad without proper protection.

- Avoid known tick habitats such as long grass, woodland and livestock areas
- Check your dog daily for ticks and remove them using a properly designed tick hook available from your vet (improper tick removal can cause infections and permit disease transmission)
- Use prescription medication available from your vet to repel and kill ticks on your dog. This needs to be started before travel to ensure protection.
- Treat your car with a spray containing permethrin, available from your vet, to prevent ticks being brought back home with you

## DISEASES SPREAD BY MOSQUITOES

- **Heartworm** affects both cats and dogs and is found in Southern Europe bordering the Mediterranean. It is spread by mosquito bites and the worms then develop in the pet's heart and major blood vessels leading to heart failure developing over months to years. Signs involve weakness, coughing, exercise intolerance and even sudden death. Treatment is prolonged, difficult and expensive and side effects can be severe.

Protect your pet by avoiding mosquito areas, keeping them inside from dusk until dawn when biting is more likely and use preventative medication prescribed by your vet every month whilst on holiday. This treatment must begin a month before travel and continue for a month after return. Fly repellent spot-on products for your dog are also recommended; available from your vet.

## DISEASES SPREAD BY SANDFLIES

- **Leishmaniasis** affects dogs and humans and occurs throughout Europe, primarily in the south but the warming climate is allowing the sandfly that spreads the disease to move northwards. Contrary to its name the fly lives in woodland areas. Symptoms are variable and can progress over many months; they include skin disease, eye disease, weight loss, swollen glands, nose bleeds, lameness, anaemia and kidney failure. Infected dogs require lifelong expensive treatment, they cannot be cured and the disease can be fatal. Dogs travelling anywhere within Europe require protection from sandfly bites and in high risk areas which border the Mediterranean, especially Spain, Italy, Portugal and Southern France, additional protection is now available via vaccination.

Avoid fly bites by keeping your dog indoors from dusk until dawn and use prescription fly repellent treatments available from your vet. These need to be started before travel. Speak to your vet about the new Leishmania vaccine if you are taking your dog to a high risk area. The initial course is 3 injections; one given every 3 weeks, followed by an annual booster. If your dog has already travelled abroad a blood test is required before vaccination.