



PROTOCOL OF ACTIONS IN THE EVENT OF THE ARRIVAL OF PET ANIMALS FROM UKRAINE

In view of the worrying developments in Ukraine and in order to avoid possible difficulties with refugees coming from that European country with their dogs, cats or other pet animals, the European Commission has informed the Member States that, in accordance with Article 32 of Regulation (EU) 576/2013, and by way of derogation from the conditions laid down for the non-commercial movement of pet animals, Member States may, in exceptional situations, authorise the non-commercial movement onto their territory of pet animals not complying with those conditions provided that:

- (a) the owner has submitted a prior application for authorisation and the Member State of destination has granted it, and
- (b) pet animals are isolated under official supervision for the time necessary for them to comply with those conditions and for no longer than six months:
 - i. at a place approved by the competent authority; and
 - ii. in accordance with the procedures laid down in the permit.

In this case, the Commission has asked all Member States, in order to facilitate the process and adequately address this emergency situation, to develop provisions on permits that would apply to pet animals travelling with refugees and would authorise their entry without prior application for an individual permit. This approach would allow them to inform their staff at the borders to ensure knowledge and thus avoid any problems.

All Member States have been in favour of entry under such conditions without the need for an individual permit.

Ukraine is a third country not listed in Annex II of Regulation (EU) 577/2013, therefore the usual conditions to be fulfilled by rabies-susceptible pet animals would be as follows:

- The animal is correctly identified, the identification shall be done by microchip;
- It has been subjected to anti-rabies vaccination;
- An antibody titration has been performed, the sample must be taken at least 30 days after vaccination, and three months before movement;
- An import certificate accompanying the animal has been issued, or in case of reintroduction, a passport certifying vaccination and the antibody titration



test is needed.

- Dogs, cats and ferrets under seven months of age are not allowed to enter (period established by the age of vaccination and the determination of post-vaccination antibodies).

It is foreseeable the arrival of pet animals that do not meet with the above conditions, making it necessary to establish a homogeneous action protocol throughout the territory of Spain in order to mitigate the risks inherent in this situation.

Rabies introduction risk assessment (RABV) in Spain

The main risk to our country has been and continues to be North Africa, which is a highly endemic territory and a frequent source of imported cases in Ceuta and Melilla. This is demonstrated by the current outbreak in Melilla, which has become endemic and difficult to control and eradicate, and it has increased the level of risk for the rest of the national territory.

The next level of risk, although considerably lower, has been represented by the illegal import of purebred dogs from Eastern European countries. With the current situation in Ukraine, the risk from this area increases significantly, although it is currently difficult to quantify as there is no estimate of the number of pets that may arrive with refugees from that country. However, a qualitative risk assessment can be carried out.

Ukraine remains the only country in Europe where rabies is widespread among animals and humans (Regulatory Mechanism in Biosystems, 2021). There are about 1,600 cases of rabies in animals in Ukraine annually and sporadic cases in humans have been reported despite preventive measures. Cases involve both dogs and cats, although the proportion of attacks on humans by infected animals was, in the period 1996-2020, dogs (1:124), cats (1:25), wild animals (1:7) and farm animals (1:2). Geographically, attacks on humans by domestic carnivores were most frequently observed in the eastern part of Ukraine, due to the high urbanisation of the region and the high density of the human population.

In the past 25 years, 63 human cases of rabies have been reported. The main sources of rabies were dogs (24 cases) and cats (22 cases). Gaps in rabies control measures are the lack of agreed coordination of cross-sectoral linkages, lack of significant efforts to raise public awareness and the lack of funding for rabies prophylaxis programmes for humans and animals.

In conclusion, it can be inferred that the qualitative risk of pet animals that may arrive accompanying their owners without ensuring compliance with the usual



requirements is very high, and depending on the number of refugees entering our country in this situation, the quantitative risk can be significantly increased. Therefore, the preliminary assessment is of high risk.

This makes it particularly relevant, in the current context, the undoubted effectiveness of having our native population of dogs, cats and ferrets properly protected as an effective containment measure. The arrival of pet animals from Ukraine in areas where the native pet population does not have the adequately protection will require the following risk mitigation measures to be taken to the utmost.

Risk mitigation measures

Any public administration, whether at national, regional or local level, including State security forces, regional and municipal police forces, as well as any professional related to public health or animal health, shall immediately inform the Official Veterinary Services of the Autonomous Community of the arrival of a pet animal (mainly a dog, cat or ferret) accompanying refugees from Ukraine.

The Official Veterinary Services of the Autonomous Communities shall take the necessary measures, in cooperation with the other competent authorities and, where appropriate, with other private entities or health professionals who collaborate on a voluntary and non-profit-making basis, so that the following protocol of action is applied as soon as possible, depending on the evaluation carried out on a case-by-case basis:

- **Identification:** if the animal is identified with a microchip and the microchip is legible, re-identification is not necessary. Otherwise, it will be identified with a microchip.
- **Vaccination against rabies:**
 1. If the animal is found to have been vaccinated in Ukraine, blood shall be taken for titration of antibodies and revaccination shall be carried out at that time. If the titration is favourable, the animal will remain with the owner in house isolation until completing a period of 3 months from the collection of blood. If the titration is unfavourable, a new titration will be carried out after 30 days, staying in quarantine in a public or private centre. If the titration is unfavourable, revaccination will be carried out 2 months after the previous vaccination and the pet animal will remain in the quarantine centre, with a new titration of antibodies 30 days after the second vaccination; if the titration is unfavourable again, quarantine will be completed in the centre for



a maximum period of 6 months from the first blood collection. If the titration is favourable, the animal will complete the quarantine period of 3 months from the blood collection in the company of its owner.

2. If the animal has been vaccinated on the entry into the European Union, blood shall be taken if more than 30 days have passed since vaccination. Otherwise, the animal shall be quarantined in a public or private centre until this period has elapsed. If the titration is favourable, the animal will complete the quarantine period of 3 months from the blood collection in the company of its owner. If the titration is unfavourable, the animal shall be revaccinated 2 months after the first vaccination and shall continue to act as in paragraph 1.
3. If the animal is not vaccinated, it will be vaccinated first and will remain in quarantine in a public or private centre; after 30 days, a blood sample will be taken for antibody titration. If the titration is favourable, it will complete the 3-month quarantine period at the centre; if unfavourable, revaccination after 2 months and shall continue in the same way as in points 1 and 2.

The serological tests will be carried out at the National Reference Laboratory in Santa Fe, free of charge.

In the event that it is necessary to carry out quarantine in public or private centres and the necessary means are not available, the contact for the necessary steps is the following e-mail address of the Directorate General for Animal Rights: dgderechosanimales@mdsocialesa2030.gob.es, or the following telephone: 915961758.

In addition, it is also important to note that, while *Echinococcus multilocularis* has not been detected in domestic animals in Spain, Ukraine is a country where the parasite is endemic. Therefore, treatment upon arrival of these animals should be carried out with an approved veterinary medicinal product containing the appropriate dose of praziquantel or pharmacologically active substances which, alone or in combination, have been shown to reduce the burden of mature and immature intestinal forms of *Echinococcus multilocularis* in the host species concerned.