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# Travelling with pets - dogs, cats and ferrets from third countries

This document is part of the information that has to be borne in mind when entering Switzerland accompanied by dogs, cats or ferrets as pets from third countries. Full information can be found on the FVO website ([www.bvet.admin.ch](http://www.bvet.admin.ch) > Topics > Travelling with pets > Bringing pets to Switzerland > Dogs, cats, ferrets from third countries).

## 1 Import regulations

### 1.1 General information

- Dogs, cats and ferrets are deemed to be pets if a total of not more than 5 animals are imported from third countries and these
  - are kept in the household out of interest in the animals or as household companions;
  - accompany their owners (or another person on behalf of the owner);
  - are not intended to be sold or transferred to another owner.
- All other cases (6 or more animals, intended for sale, unaccompanied import) are deemed to be trade imports – see [www.bvet.admin.ch](http://www.bvet.admin.ch) > Topics > Import > Live animals > Live animals from third countries > Dogs, cats, ferrets (professional import)
- These import regulations also apply to temporary imports and re-imports of Swiss animals.
- An animal health permit is required for importing dogs, cats and ferrets from third countries if they are entering Switzerland via a Swiss airport from a “rabies risk country” (see 1.3.2).
- This requirement for a permit does not apply to animals entering Switzerland in transit through the EU by road or rail. The animals are controlled when they enter the EU according to EU regulations. At the Swiss border customs authorities make spot-check controls occasionally.
- With a few exceptions, it is forbidden to import and re-import dogs with docked ears and/or a cropped tail (see document “Fragen und Antworten zu kupierten Hunden” – in German only).

### 1.2 Identification

Dogs, cats and ferrets must be correctly identified with a microchip. The microchip must be readable by standard reading devices, i.e. they must conform to ISO 11784 or Annex A of ISO 11785 – otherwise the animals must be accompanied by a suitable reading device. Many “incompatible” microchips are still being manufactured, especially in the USA. Therefore, make sure your animal is fitted with a so-called “Euro-chip”, which only contains digits as identification code and no asterisks (\*).

Clearly legible tattoos will still be accepted at the border crossing during a transitional phase until 30 June 2011.

If a dog is definitively imported into Switzerland, it must be taken to a veterinarian within the first 10 days of entering the country: All dogs that are kept in Switzerland must be registered in a database by a veterinarian.

## **1.3 Countries of origin and rabies risks**

Dogs, cats and ferrets may in principle be imported as “pets” from any third country.

The document “List of countries ‘rabies’ – dogs, cats, ferrets” (on [www.bvet.admin.ch](http://www.bvet.admin.ch) > Topics > Travelling with pets > Bringing pets to Switzerland > Dogs, cats, ferrets from third countries) groups all countries into one of three categories with differing rabies risks:

- EU and other countries with compulsory pet passport (including Switzerland)
- Countries at low risk for rabies
- Rabies risk countries

Requirements for rabies vaccinations, laboratory tests and waiting periods vary depending on the risk of dogs, cats or ferrets becoming infected with urban rabies in the country of origin. These requirements are described in the following sections. They must be confirmed in the relevant certificate by the official veterinarian responsible.

### **1.3.1 Importing from countries at low risk for rabies**

These countries are listed in the document “List of countries ‘rabies’” under the heading “Countries with low risks of rabies”. The regulations apply to all dogs, cats and ferrets that were kept exclusively in countries at low risk for rabies, Switzerland or the EU for at least 6 months before entering the country – or since birth in the case of young animals.

Dogs, cats and ferrets from these countries must have been vaccinated against rabies with an inactivated vaccine (having an efficacy that corresponds at least to one international antigen unit according to WHO standards) as recommended by the manufacturer and at least 21 days before being imported. For animals given regular booster vaccinations within the period recommended by the manufacturer, the waiting period of 21 days does not apply.

Young animals less than three months old from countries regarded to be at low risk for rabies may only be brought into Switzerland if they are accompanied by and still dependent on their mothers or if a veterinary certificate can be provided showing that they have been kept at the place where they were born since birth and have never come into contact with wild animals which could have been exposed to an infection with rabies (see under “Import documents”).

### **1.3.2 Import from rabies risk countries**

These countries are listed in the document “List of countries ‘rabies’” under the heading “Rabies risk countries”. Dogs, cats and ferrets that enter Switzerland from one of these countries must meet the following requirements:

- They must have been vaccinated against rabies with an inactivated vaccine (having an efficacy that corresponds at least to one international antigen unit according to WHO standards) as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Not earlier than 30 days after this (and not after the validity period recommended by the vaccine manufacturer has elapsed) blood must be taken from the animal and tested for antibodies against rabies. This test must be carried out in a laboratory accredited by the EU (see list at [www.bvet.admin.ch](http://www.bvet.admin.ch) > Topics > Travelling with pets > Bringing pets to Switzerland > Dogs, cats, ferrets from third countries). Adequate protection is considered to be conferred by a concentration of neutralizing rabies antibodies (a “titre”) of at least 0.5 International Units per milli-

litre of serum (IU/mL).

- The 30-day waiting period until blood sampling is followed by a further waiting period of 3 months from when the blood sample is taken until entry is possible. This means that at least 4 months must elapse between the last rabies vaccination before antibody testing and entry into the country.

Initial vaccinations often fail to confer adequate protection – especially in pups aged less than 3 months, because any antibodies still present at this time from the mother can compromise the development of immunity. It is therefore recommended that blood samples for antibody testing are not taken until 30 days after a second basic immunization (at least 10 days after the first rabies vaccination). It is therefore scarcely possible to import young animals from “rabies risk countries” before the age of 7 months.

The waiting period of 4 months may be waived in the following cases:

- If dogs, cats or ferrets have previously met all the above import regulations in full (incl. antibody testing and waiting period) and thereafter always received booster vaccinations against rabies within the validity period of the vaccine as recommended by the manufacturer.
- If dogs, cats or ferrets (originally) come from Switzerland, the EU or a country at low risk for rabies and the antibody test was carried out before leaving Switzerland for the rabies risk country.

## **2 Import documents**

### **2.1 *Veterinary certificate, confirmation, pet ID***

A veterinary certificate is needed to enter Switzerland from third countries accompanied by dogs, cats or ferrets as pets. This must be issued by the official veterinarian responsible in the country of origin. A sample certificate can be found at [www.bvet.admin.ch](http://www.bvet.admin.ch) > > Bringing pets to Switzerland > Dogs, cats, ferrets from third countries.

Pups aged less than 3 months from countries at low risk for rabies must in addition be accompanied by a veterinary confirmation; see 1.3.1. No pups aged less than 3 months may be imported from rabies risk countries. There is also no exemption permit as there is with imports from the EU.

For the re-importing of Swiss animals, the Swiss pet passport is sufficient if all import regulations are met and entered in this passport.

### **2.2 *Import via Swiss airports***

If you want to bring in dogs, cats or ferrets as pets from rabies risk countries (see 1.3.2) via a Swiss airport, an animal health permit is required. An application for the permit must be submitted to the FVO not later than 3 weeks before import. For application form (03/16), see [www.bvet.admin.ch](http://www.bvet.admin.ch) > > Bringing pets to Switzerland > Dogs, cats, ferrets from third countries.

For animals with a “Swiss pet passport”, the FVO enters the permit in this document on request. It may then be renewed by any registered, practising veterinarian, as long as the booster vaccinations are always carried out within the vaccine validity period indicated by the manufacturer.

### 3 Regulations of other authorities

- Dogs, cats and ferrets that are definitively imported into Switzerland are subject to value-added tax. The importer must be proactive in this regard and notify the customs authorities about the importing of any animal liable for customs duty or value-added tax.
- Dogs must be registered with the local authority (*Gemeinde / Commune*) of the owner's place of residence, so that it can collect the dog tax.
- A licence from the cantonal veterinary office is necessary for the keeping of wild animals (e.g. ferrets), as it is for trading in or advertising with animals, for animal shows, small animal markets, zoos, circuses and animal experiments. Please contact the cantonal veterinary office concerned for further information.
- For the importing and transit of all animal species listed in Annexes I-III of the Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and all non-domesticated species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians (e.g. Bengal cats), a licence in accordance with species conservation law is necessary, see [www.bvet.admin.ch](http://www.bvet.admin.ch) > Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora / CITES.