

INFORMATION DOCUMENT ON THE IMPORTATION OF DOGS AND CATS INTO THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Updated on the 08-06-2022

1. Import requirements for dogs and cats

When a dog or cat is imported into South Africa, the following documents must be presented to the South African Veterinary Import Control Official on arrival at the **Port of Entry**:

- i) Original Veterinary Import Permit, issued by the Permit Office of Directorate Food Import Export Standards.
- ii) Original Veterinary Health Certificate, signed, stamped and certified by Veterinary Authorities of the exporting country.
- iii) Any other relevant documentation specified, e.g.: Indemnity Declaration, a valid Rabies Vaccination Certificate, etc.
- iv) The laboratory report for the pre-import blood test results, in English.

These documents will be inspected and the dog or cat will either be released into South Africa or transported to the state quarantine station for those dogs for which quarantine is required, when all requirements have been fully complied with.

The documents can either travel with the animal **or** for dogs and cats that will not be quarantined on arrival in South Africa, the person collecting the animal must present the documents to the officials at the airport. The documents of dogs being quarantined must travel with the animal, unless the importer or their agent can arrange for the documents to be provided to the veterinary official before or on arrival of the dog in South Africa.

All dogs and cats imported into South Africa must be **permanently identified** with a **microchip** (tattoos will not be accepted). The microchip must be able to be read by ISO 11784 or ISO 11785 scanners.

All dogs and cats imported into South Africa must be registered as **manifest cargo** and **cannot fly as excess baggage**. The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development does not have veterinary officials at the passenger terminal of OR Tambo (Johannesburg), King Shaka International Airport (Durban) and Cape Town International Airport to inspect dogs and cats entering South Africa via the passenger terminal of the respective airports. **The dogs and cats can only disembark via the cargo terminal of the respective airports.**

The Department does not object to dogs and cats traveling in the airline cabin with the owner, **if allowed by the airline**, on condition that pets are **registered as manifest cargo** and the airline staff must take the pets from the owner on landing, **to the cargo terminal** for inspection.

2. Veterinary Import Permit

A **Veterinary Import Permit** is required to import dogs and cats into South Africa.

The application form can be obtained by e-mailing VetPermits@Dalrrd.gov.za or from the following link: <https://www.dalrrd.gov.za/Branches/Agricultural-Production-Health-Food-Safety/Animal-Health/importexport/forms>. Alternatively, you could come to the Permit Office, for the Directorate Animal Health, at:

Room G52, Delpen Building, c/o Annie Botha and Union Street, Riviera, Pretoria
 Telephone: **+27 (0) 12 319 7514** **+27 (0) 12 319 7503**

+27 (0) 12 319 7461
+27 (0) 12 319 7406

+27 (0) 12 319 7632
+27 (0) 12 319 7633

To apply for a Veterinary Import Permit, send the completed application form with proof of payment to VetPermits@Dalrrd.gov.za or deliver the documents to the Permit Office.

The payment will need to be deposited into the Permit Office's bank account:

The tariff for the Veterinary Import Permit is amended annually from 1 April. Please confirm the tariff amount with the permit office at VetPermits@Dalrrd.gov.za, before making the payment.

The Permit Office's bank account details are as follows:

Name of bank:	Standard Bank of South Africa
Name of account holder:	National Department of Agriculture
Account no.:	011219556 International Band
Branch:	010845 IB BRAND 0001982 CENTRE CODE Swift Code SBZA-ZAJJ
Name of the branch:	Arcadia
Reference:	Must be Importers Name & Surname

PLEASE NOTE:

You are responsible for your bank charges as well as the Foreign Bank charges. The Department will not issue a permit if the full fee for the veterinary import permit is not received.

In cases where you are applying on behalf of someone please make sure that you pay under that person's name or company's name.

Please take note that **no application will be processed without proof of payment.**

Proof of payment must be e-mailed to VetPermits@Dalrrd.gov.za, with a copy of the application form for the Veterinary Import Permit.

Payments can also be made at the cashier for the Permit Office on the 1st floor of the Delpen Building, c/o Annie Botha and Union Street, Riviera, Pretoria.

When **animals are required to be quarantined**, the importer must contact the Quarantine Officer at the port of entry, to arrange a reservation for accommodation:

Johannesburg (Kempton Park quarantine station)

Tel: +27 (0) 11 393 7980 or Fax +27 (0) 11 973 2828

Cape Town (Milnerton quarantine station)

Tel: +27 (0) 21 551 2050 or Fax +27 (0) 21 551 1378

The Quarantine station will **make the reservation for accommodation** at the Quarantine Station and must complete the applicable part of the application form. The application form with the completed quarantine reservation, must be sent to the Permit Office.

An **Indemnity Declaration** (in respect of imported animals undergoing quarantine) must also be completed and attached to the application form. This Indemnity Declaration form can be obtained from the Permit Office or the quarantine station.

Please state on the application form whether the permit will be **collected or should be mailed**

to you. Please note that the postal service in South Africa is unreliable. We recommend making use of a courier service to collect the permit and deliver it to you directly. In cases where the permit is going to be collected, please **confirm** with permit office, whether the permit is ready for collection, before you come to collect it.

Following receipt of the completed application form, a **Veterinary Import Permit** will be issued. Please also note that it takes five (5) to ten (10) working days to process the permit, if approved.

The Directorate Animal Health, Sub-Directorate Import Export Policy Unit, in Pretoria, will be able to assist you should any **further information** be required. Please e-mail your enquiries to LeratoDI@Dalrrd.gov.za, WeekendM@Dalrrd.gov.za and VetPermits@Dalrrd.gov.za.

3. **Veterinary Health Certificate**

A specimen **Veterinary Health Certificate** will be provided to you with the Veterinary Import Permit. The required certification must be provided on the **official certificate paper** of the exporting country, **in English**, by a veterinarian authorized thereto by the Veterinary Authority of the exporting country, **within 10 days of departure**.

4. **Quarantine requirements**

Cats are not routinely quarantined on arrival in South Africa. The cat must, however, have a valid **Veterinary Import Permit**, a correctly completed **Veterinary Health Certificate**, signed and stamped by a government veterinarian of the exporting country, and a **valid Rabies vaccination certificate**. If the **originals** of both the Veterinary Import Permit (VIP) and the Veterinary Health Certificate (VHC) are not available at the time of the cat's arrival in South Africa, the cat will be kept in quarantine until the required documentation is presented at the quarantine station.

Quarantine for a period of approximately 14 days will be imposed on some dogs, **depending on the country of export**. Dogs from the following list of countries **do not need to be quarantined on arrival in South Africa**:

Argentina	Australia	Austria	Belgium
Botswana	British Channel Islands	Bulgaria	Canada
Comoros	Cyprus	Czech Republic	Denmark
Estonia	eSwatini	Finland	France
Germany	Greece	Hungary	Iceland
Israel	Italy	Latvia	Lesotho
Lithuania	Luxembourg	Malawi	Malta
Mauritius	Namibia	the Netherlands	New Zealand
Norway	Poland	Portugal	Republic of Ireland
Reunion	Romania	Seychelles	Slovakia
Slovenia	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland
the United Kingdom	United States of America	Zimbabwe	

The British Channel Islands refers to Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man.

However, the dog must have a valid Veterinary Import Permit, a correctly completed Veterinary Health Certificate, signed and stamped by a government veterinarian of the exporting country, a copy of the laboratory report and a valid Rabies vaccination certificate. If the **originals** of both the Veterinary Import Permit and the Veterinary Health Certificate are not available at the time of the

dog's arrival in South Africa, the dog will be kept in quarantine until the required documentation is presented at the quarantine station.

Dogs imported from countries not mentioned in the above list will be quarantined on arrival in South Africa.

A **quarantine booking** is required when applying for the veterinary import permit. Before a quarantine booking for a dog can be confirmed, the importer must sign an indemnity form. Copies of the indemnity form can be obtained from the permit office at VetPermits@Dalrrd.gov.za and from the two state quarantine stations (see contact details in point 2 above). A copy of the signed indemnity form must be e-mailed to the quarantine station to make the quarantine booking and the original signed indemnity form needs to be handed in at the quarantine station where the dog will be quarantined, at or before collecting the dog from quarantine. Bookings at the quarantine stations will only be confirmed on receipt of the signed indemnity form.

Dogs that will be **quarantined on arrival** in South Africa may only be imported into South Africa via **OR Tambo (Johannesburg) or Cape Town International Airports**. Dogs and cats that are being imported from countries not subject to quarantine may also be imported into South Africa via Durban International Airport. Dogs and cats will not be allowed to enter South Africa via any other airport or port of entry (including land border posts).

5. Vaccination against Rabies

Dogs and cats must have a valid **vaccination against Rabies**. In the case of the **primary (first) Rabies vaccination**, the vaccination must be administered **not less than 30 days and not more than 12 months before the date of import**. In the case of a **booster Rabies vaccination**, the vaccination must be administered **not more than 12 months before the date of import**. A vaccination against Rabies is only considered to be a booster vaccination where the booster vaccination was administered prior to the expiry of the previous Rabies vaccination.

Vaccination against Rabies is not required for dogs and cats imported from Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, the British Channel Islands and Northern Ireland. However, vaccination against Rabies for dogs and cats imported from these countries is strongly advised, as Rabies is endemic in South Africa. This will ensure that the dog or cat has sufficient immunity against Rabies on arrival in South Africa to prevent it from contracting Rabies in South Africa.

Puppies and kittens under three months of age do not need to be vaccinated against Rabies. However, these puppies and kittens, less than 3 months of age, may only travel to South Africa if the dam or queen of the puppy or kitten has been vaccinated against Rabies more than 30 days and less than 12 months before the birth of the puppy or kitten. A copy of the dam or queen's Rabies vaccination certificate must accompany the Veterinary Health certificate. These puppies or kittens must be vaccinated against Rabies after arrival in South Africa at 3 months of age and proof of the vaccination must be presented to the South African Veterinary Authorities, through the State Veterinarian at the port of entry.

6. Test requirements for Dogs

Before dogs may be imported into South Africa, the dogs need to be certified free from the following five diseases, **by means of blood tests**:

1. Babesia gibsoni
2. Brucella canis
3. Dirofilaria immitis
4. Trypanosoma evansi, and
5. Leishmania

The dog's blood can either be tested in the country of export or the blood samples may be sent to South Africa for testing. Alternatively, the blood samples may be tested in any country, on condition that the laboratory is a government approved laboratory, accredited for the specific tests required, in that specific country.

From October 2017 country freedom declarations will not be accepted as specified on the Veterinary Health Certificate issued to the importer with the Veterinary Import Permit. The dogs must be tested for **all five diseases**, as listed above with the testing methods specified below. The onus is on the importer to check that the correct Veterinary Health Certificate has been issued with the Veterinary Import Permit, as it is named on the veterinary import permit, in point 2.2. **Thus it is the importer's responsibility to ensure all import requirements are met as specified on the correct Veterinary Health Certificate.**

The Directorate Animal Health requires the following test or tests to be used for the above mentioned five diseases:

<i>Babesia Gibsoni:</i>	Immunofluorescence antibody test OR ELISA using the BgTRAP antigen
	AND Giemsa blood smear OR Real-time PCR
<i>Brucella canis:</i>	Serum agglutination OR Rapid slide agglutination test
<i>Dirofilaria immitis:</i>	Microfilarial filtration test
<i>Trypanosoma evansi:</i>	Card agglutination test
	AND Giemsa blood smear
Leishmaniosis:	Indirect fluorescent antibody OR
	ELISA OR
	Direct agglutination test OR
	Western blot/membrane immunoassay

NOTE: *Trypanosoma evansi* and *Babesia gibsoni* require both serology and an agent identification test. Therefore 2 testing methods must be performed for both diseases.

The Knotts test will not be accepted for testing for *Dirofilaria immitis*.

Any dog which tests positive for any of the above-mentioned five diseases will not be eligible for import into South Africa.

The blood samples must be **drawn within 30 days** of the date of import into South Africa. **Dogs may only be imported if all blood test results are negative.** The **laboratory report** must be presented in **English**.

If it is necessary to send samples to South Africa for testing, these samples must be sent by **air**, accompanied by a **copy of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute master import permit** for the import of diagnostic specimens, **under cover of an air waybill/courier waybill** to:

DIRECTOR (ATTENTION: DR LAURA LOPEZ, e-mail: LopezL@arc.agric.za)
ONDERSTEPSOORT VETERINARY INSTITUTE
DIAGNOSTIC REGISTRATION TEL. NO.: +27 12 529 9272
100 OLD SOUTPAN ROAD FAX NO.: +27 12 529 9275
ONDERSTEPSOORT, 0110
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Please note that some of the blood tests for dogs are performed only on a Wednesday. It is

therefore recommended that samples are sent to arrive by Tuesday at the latest. If samples arrive later, the tests will only be done on the following Wednesday.

The **samples required** for testing each dog are as follows:

1 x 5ml EDTA, well mixed (purple top tube).

2 x 3ml serum: serum must be centrifuged and aliquot **clear** before shipping to SA.

2 x blood smears - unstained – wrapped separately in tissue paper - then protected from moisture in a water proof plastic bag.

The samples are to be securely packed and sent in accordance with **IATA regulations**. **Samples must be kept cold, but do not freeze, as this will render the sample useless**. The package should be clearly marked “**Diagnostic Specimens**”. The samples are to be accompanied by a copy of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute Master Veterinary Import Permit for the Import of Diagnostic Specimens (OVIMVIP) and by a certificate issued by the Veterinary Authorities of the exporting country, in which the following information is furnished.

- 1) Number of the OVIMVIP referred to above
- 2) Full description of the dog(s)
- 3) Type and Number of samples
- 4) Tests required - see above
- 5) Consignee
- 6) Consignor
- 7) Air Way Bill number and Flight Number

Arrangements must be made with the OVI regarding payment for the tests prior to commencement of the tests. Contact the laboratory at the above telephone number or e-mail address to get more information on what samples have to be submitted, how the samples have to be packaged and the cost of the tests.

The blood samples must be sent by air as cargo and cannot be brought in by private individuals as part of their luggage. The samples can only enter South Africa via OR Tambo (Johannesburg) International Airport.

Please contact Dr Lopez at LopezL@arc.agric.za for a copy of the Master Veterinary Import Permit referred to above.

All dogs that have to be quarantined on arrival in South Africa will be retested for the above mentioned five diseases. This is regardless of the results of the blood tests done before the dog was exported to South Africa and is done at the owner's expense.

Dogs found positive for the above mentioned five diseases will not be released from Quarantine.

If, while in quarantine, a dog is found to be positive for ***Brucella canis*, *Leishmania*, *Trypanosoma evansi* or *Babesia gibsoni***, the dog will **either be returned to the exporting country or humanely euthanized** in the quarantine station. This will be done at the owner's expense.

If, while in quarantine, a dog is found to be positive for ***Dirofilaria immitis*** the owner will be given the option of **treatment for the dog while in the quarantine station or returning the dog to the exporting country**. If the dog is treated in quarantine, it will be re-tested following treatment and will only be released from quarantine once acceptable test results are received to indicate that the dog does not pose a disease risk. All costs for quarantine, testing, treatment or return of

the dog will be at the owner's expense.

7. Preventative Treatment Requirements for Dogs

All dogs must be treated prophylactically for *Dirofilaria immitis* **from the date of negative testing** (the date that the negative test result is reported by the laboratory) **until export** at the required intervals and according to the manufacturer's recommendations, with one of the following:

- Diethylcarbamazine (5-6 mg/kg per os daily)
OR
- Ivermectin (6 micrograms/kg per os monthly)
OR
- Milbemycin oxime (0,5 mg/kg per os monthly)
OR
- Moxidectin (3 micrograms/kg per os monthly)
OR
- Selamectin (6mg/kg)
(Revolution) Prophylactic only
OR
- Proheart SR12 (Subcut injection yearly)*

* If the date of the negative test falls within 11 months of giving the Proheart SR12 subcutaneous injection then no further *Dirofilaria immitis* treatment is required.

Sufficient **prophylactic treatment for *Dirofilaria immitis* needs to accompany the dog to South Africa** so that the dog can receive a **six month course** of medication **after importation into South Africa**. There are very few medications registered for the prophylactic treatment for *Dirofilaria immitis* in South Africa. Therefore, it is necessary for the importer to bring the six month supply of medication from the exporting country to South Africa with the dog.

In addition, the dogs must be treated with an **effective acaricide** (tick preventative medication) and **insect repellent** (for biting flies), registered in the exporting country, at the time of blood sample collection for the tests, and until export, according to the manufacturer's instructions. This treatment(s) must be administered **within 30 days of export**.

8. Dogs & Cats from Neighbouring Countries

Dogs and cats entering South Africa from **Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and eSwatini** do not need a Veterinary Import Permit. These dogs and cats need an **Inter-territorial Movement Permit** that certifies that the dog or cat has been **vaccinated against Rabies** more than 30 days and less than 12 months before the date of import. The cats and dogs need to have a **health check within 7 days of export**, where they must be found to be free of clinical signs of communicable diseases and fit to travel.

This does not apply for dogs entering South Africa from Mozambique. These dogs may only be imported into South Africa with a normal Veterinary Import Permit and Veterinary Health Certificate and are **required to be quarantined** on arrival in South Africa. The dogs need to have the necessary blood tests (see point 6 "Test Requirements for Dogs" above) done prior to export and must be flown from Mozambique to either **O.R. Tambo** or **Cape Town International Airports**, where the dogs will be placed in state quarantine for approximately 14 days. They will be re tested according to the normal protocol for dogs in quarantine. **The dogs may not enter**

South Africa by road. A Veterinary Import Permit is needed to bring cats into South Africa from Mozambique, but cats may enter South Africa by road and quarantine is not required.

9. Dogs & Cats from other African Countries

Dogs being imported from **other African countries**, excluding the neighbouring countries described in point 8 above, must have a Veterinary Import Permit and Veterinary Health Certificate. **They cannot enter South Africa by road via one of our neighbouring countries.** The dogs need to have the necessary blood tests (see point 6 “Test Requirements for Dogs” above) done prior to export and must be flown to either **Johannesburg (O.R. Tambo) or Cape Town International Airports**, where the dogs will be quarantined for approximately 14 days and will be re tested according to the normal protocol for dogs in quarantine.

Dogs and cats from **Malawi** do not need a veterinary import permit. These dogs and cats need a Veterinary Health Certificate that certifies that the dog or cat has been **vaccinated against Rabies** more than 30 days and less than 12 months before the date of import. The cats and dogs need to have a **health check within 7 days of export**, where they must be found to be free of clinical signs of communicable diseases and fit to travel.

Cats from other African countries need a Veterinary Import Permit and a Veterinary Health Certificate that has been stamped and signed by a certifying veterinarian in the country of export. This must accompany the cats. Cats must also have had a vaccination against Rabies more than 30 days and less than 12 months before the date of import. These cats can enter South Africa by road.

10. Dogs and Cats in Transit through South Africa to other African Countries

Dogs and cats that are moving **in transit** through South Africa **by road** to other African countries are considered to be **normal imports** and therefore need to comply with South Africa’s veterinary import requirements. These animals need to have a Veterinary Import Permit from South Africa and a Veterinary Health Certificate from the certifying veterinarian of the country of export. The dogs need to have the **necessary blood tests** (see point 6 “Test Requirements for Dogs” above) done prior to export.

All dogs and cats travelling **in transit by air to SADC countries** must be accompanied by a South African Veterinary In-transit Permit for dogs and cats. They must comply with the South African import health requirements for dogs and cats. The **SADC countries** to which this requirement applies are: **Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, eSwatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, the Seychelles, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.**

All dogs and cats travelling **by air to countries other than the countries listed in the previous paragraph** need not conform to the South African import health requirements for dogs and cats, provided these dogs and cats do not leave the customs area of the international airport in South Africa. These dogs and cats need to be accompanied by a **South African Veterinary In-transit Permit.**

If a dog or cat is travelling **in transit from Botswana, eSwatini, Lesotho, Malawi Namibia, or Zimbabwe** via South Africa to another country, the dog or cat does not need to have a Veterinary In-transit Permit from South Africa. However, the dog or cat must comply with the requirements as indicated under point 8 “Dogs and Cats from Neighbouring Countries” above.

11. Dogs leaving South Africa for recreational purposes (shows or Holidays) for a period of 10 days

A Veterinary Import Permit for dogs travelling out of South Africa for recreational purposes is required for the re-import of dogs that have travelled outside South Africa for a short period of time.

These permits will only be issued for dogs travelling **to countries for which South Africa does not require quarantine**, and are **only valid for a period of 10 days outside South Africa**.

The dog must be permanently identified with a **microchip**. The description of the dog, i.e. the name, breed, sex, colour and microchip number must be written on the application form when applying for the Recreational Veterinary Import Permit.

No blood tests are required for the dog to be re-imported into South Africa, as the dog may not have been out of South Africa for more than 10 days. The blood tests would not be of any value since even if a dog is infected with one of the above mentioned five diseases during the 10 days, the dog will not yet have developed symptoms or mounted an immune response to have a positive result to the blood tests.

Therefore, **in place of testing these dogs, the owners are required to take preventive measures** to ensure that the dogs do not become infected with the diseases.

The dog must have a **valid Rabies vaccination**. The Rabies vaccination must have been done more than 30 days and less than 12 months before travelling.

If the country the dog is travelling to is not free from ***Dirofilaria immitis***, the dog must, on arrival in the exporting country be put on one of the following medications as a preventative treatment for *Dirofilaria immitis* :

- Diethylcarbamazine (5-6 mg/kg per os daily), or
- Ivermectin (6 micrograms/kg per os monthly), or
- Milbemycin oxime (0,5 mg/kg per os monthly), or
- Moxidectin (3 micrograms/kg per os monthly), or
- ProHeart SR 12 (subcut injectable yearly).

The medication must be sufficient to treat the dog for six months after return to South Africa.

If the country the dog is travelling to is not free from ***Trypanosoma evansi***, the dog must be treated with either Suramin or Diminazene aceturate, according to the manufacturer's instructions for use and under veterinary supervision, on the day of departure from the visited country to South Africa.

If the country the dog is travelling to is not free from ***Leishmania*** and / or ***Babesia gibsoni***, the dog must be treated with an effective acaricide and insect repellent registered in South Africa, before departure and throughout their stay.

Please contact Mrs Lerato Diale or Mr Weekend Mantshidi, Animal Health Technicians, Import Export Policy Unit, Directorate Animal Health, Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development at telephone: +27-12-319-7559, e-mail: LeratoDI@Dalrrd.gov.za, or e-mail: WeekendM@Dalrrd.gov.za should you have further queries or require clarification.

Brief Summary for Importing Dogs into South Africa from Countries not including Neighbouring Countries

Step 1:

Apply for a Veterinary Import Permit at VetPermits@Dalrrd.gov.za as described in point 2 of the information document. If your dog is required to be quarantined, bookings at the quarantine station should be made first.



Step 2:

Draft a timeline for the Veterinary Health Certificate. (Example for reference purposes only)

- Check that the dog has been **microchipped**.
- Check that **vaccination against Rabies** is administered according to import specification.
- Have **blood samples** collected by a veterinarian, within 30 days pre-export and test for all 5 diseases, as described in point 6 of the information document, at a government approved laboratory.
- **Prophylactic treatment for *Dirofilaria immitis*** should be administered on the date of receipt of the negative test results, as described in point 7 of the information document.
- **Preventative tick and biting fly treatment** must be administered at the time of blood sample collection for the tests, and until export. Please consult a veterinarian to ensure that the product selected can be administered with the prophylactic treatment for *Dirofilaria immitis*.



Step 3:

Within **10 days before export**, the dog must have a **veterinary check-up**. The **official government veterinarian** authorized to do export certification should **endorse the Veterinary Health Certificate** within 10 days of export.

Please note:

Should there be any concerns or queries, the documents and laboratory report may be sent to the State veterinarian at the port of entry, Ms Lerato Diale or Mr Weekend Mantshidi (contact information is on page 9 of the information document) for clarification. (This step may be performed at any point during the process)

This summary is only an addition to the information document, to guide importers regarding the planning process, and should under no circumstances be used as the only source of reference for the import of dogs and cats into South Africa.