

Dog Importation Considerations

There is an increasing trend in Europe, including the UK, to rescue dogs from abroad and import them. Many dogs around the world are living in desperate conditions: on the streets, in unregulated breeding establishments and even being bred for food. This has led many charities and independent groups rescuing dogs and then seeking adoption, frequently in different countries. Although these dogs are often in desperate need of homes, there are a number of things to take into consideration when adopting a rescue dog from abroad.

Many dogs will have been living as strays or will have lived their whole lives in kennelled situations. As a result, they are likely to have been poorly socialised and may be very frightened around people. This can lead initially to nervous aggression, separation anxiety and other behavioural disorders. Behaviourists can help new owners with the transition to a household environment but this whole process requires a lot of time and flexibility. Dogs with these rescue backgrounds are unlikely to make suitable pets for busy households or those with young children.

Some dogs will be sold or imported illegally. Although there are many highly reputable charities and groups doing excellent rescue work, some dogs will be imported illegally. False documentation may lead to subsequent quarantine and purchase of illegal dogs will fuel further propagation of the industry. Pets should only be purchased from a reputable source.

There is a huge demand to rescue dogs in the UK. Rescue charities in the UK such as the Dogs Trust, Homeless Hounds, RSPCA and breed specific rescues are all working to rescue abused and homeless dogs in the UK and to rehome them. It is worth considering if a UK rescue dog could meet your needs.

Risk of imported disease. The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) ensures preventative treatments are given against rabies and the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis*, both of which are a serious threat to human health. However, there are many parasites currently not present in the UK which foreign dogs may harbour which are capable of causing long term health problems to humans and UK pets. It is therefore vitally important that imported dogs have a full health check with a veterinary surgeon. Imported dogs may be infected without showing any signs of illness. They may, however, go on to develop life long and potentially life threatening illness. Imported dogs should also be blood tested for exotic disease before or shortly after importation. This testing is expensive and, if found to be positive, may require a lifetime of testing and treatment with no guarantee of recovery.

Risk of exotic ticks. Imported dogs may be carrying exotic ticks such as *Rhipicephalus sanguineus* which can go on to infest homes and sometimes carry disease. In addition to being treated for ticks, it is vital that dogs are checked for ticks upon arrival. Even if all these precautions are taken, it can't be guaranteed that ticks will not survive and so ongoing vigilance is key.

ESCCAP UK & Ireland is supported in 2018 by:

Sponsors



Donors



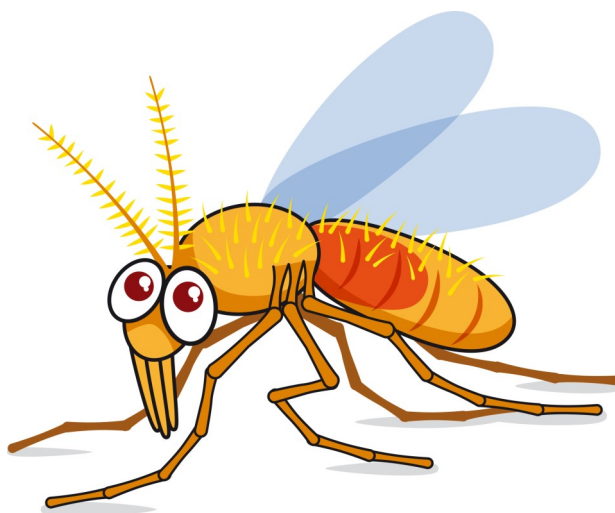
Fellowships



The time, expense and possible disease implications should all be carefully considered before importing a dog from abroad. There are routes other than adoption which can help the wider plight of foreign rescue dogs and improve conditions in the long term:

- Supporting charities financially in foreign countries helps to improve conditions for dogs living there.
- Becoming actively involved with local charities to work with communities to improve attitudes towards dogs and pet living conditions.
- Engage with social media campaigns to raise awareness of the plight of dogs in many countries across the world.

Rehoming dogs in their own countries and supporting national charities will improve conditions for dogs while preventing the spread of parasitic disease to new countries.



Factors to consider when deciding whether to import a dog from abroad

For more information on the parasite risks associated with importing rescue pets please visit the ESCCAP UK & Ireland website (www.esccapuk.org.uk)

