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Animal Biosecurity Advice 2020-A01

Dog and cat imports: dates for rabies testing results

The Department of Agriculture has aligned requirements that cover the date of validity of acceptable rabies neutralising antibody titres (RNAT) for dogs and cats for export to Australia.

For permit applications received on and after 20 January 2020, acceptable RNATs will be dated from arrival of the sample at the testing laboratory. The minimum 180 day pre-export period spent outside Australia where an RNAT is required will now commence on that same date, as has been the case where dogs and cats were being prepared for export in a non-approved country.

Dogs and cats can only be exported to Australia from a country approved by Australia for that purpose (an approved country). Australia recognises that many owners live in countries not approved to directly export the dogs or cats to Australia (non-approved countries). Step-by-step guides allow for preparation of animals in non-approved countries in ways that manage the biosecurity risks.

Australia has strict requirements to manage the risk of rabies in all imported dogs and cats. Australia's import conditions for dogs and cats from countries it does not accept as free from rabies (Group 3 and non-approved countries) specify that a valid rabies neutralizing antibody titre (RNAT) result must be achieved and maintained for a period of time greater than the internationally accepted incubation period for this disease before the animal can be sent to Australia.

That assurance is primarily met by a testing laboratory accepted by Australia demonstrating an acceptable RNAT in blood taken from the animal not less than 180 days prior to export to Australia. For preparation in a non-approved country, the date of validity of the RNAT was accepted as the date when the blood sample was received at the testing laboratory. For preparation of the animal in a Group 3 country, it was the date when the blood sample was taken for testing.

Australia has now aligned the requirements covering the date of validity of an acceptable RNAT under both these sets of requirements for administrative purposes.

For import permit applications for dogs and cats received on and after 20 January 2020, the date of a satisfactory RNAT is the date when the blood sample was received at the laboratory where testing was performed. Owners of dogs or cats being prepared for export to Australia in any Group 3 or non-approved country should start the 180 day pre-export period for their pet dog or cat on the date the sample that returned the satisfactory RNAT test result was received by the testing laboratory.

Further information on how to import your dog and cat into Australia can be found on the [department's website](#).

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