

# New rules for commercial imports of pets from higher risk countries

- Importers must apply to be registered as an approved trader under new scheme
- Scheme ensures rescue animals can be rehomed whilst national biosecurity is still protected

The Government has today (25th October 2022) announced a new 'Approved Importers scheme' for pet imports from currently higher risk countries. It is being introduced to replace the temporary ban on commercial imports, including rescue animals, from Belarus, Poland, Romania and Ukraine, and allow for safer movements to resume.

Under a new safeguarding declaration, anyone commercially importing dogs, cats and ferrets into Great Britain from the previously suspended countries can now apply for Approved Importer status with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) from 29th October 2022.

In order to be approved, importers must be based or have representation in the UK, have no record of serious non-compliances in the last 12 months, and share with APHA the details of the transporter and the registered premises from where the animals originate from.

The UK Government is absolutely committed to protecting our biosecurity and public health, particularly ensuring we retain our long-held freedom from rabies and tapeworm. The new regulations will allow rescue organisations to resume activities, while still complying with our strict animal health and biosecurity standards.

The move is being taken as an increasing number of people are choosing to import pets from abroad with the hope of rehoming them, unaware of the associated health and welfare risks.

## **Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss said:**

Commercial imports, including rescue animals are often of unknown background and disease status.

Under the Government's new scheme, tighter controls will mean approved importers must arrive through designated points of entry and share all relevant health certificates, documents and blood tests before arrival to allow for more rigorous checks to take place. This will help protect animal and human health.

## **Biosecurity Minister, Lord Benyon said:**

We are committed to ensuring safe commercial pet movements including rescues can continue and stopping those which carry too great a biosecurity risk.

The new scheme means we can safely lift the temporary suspension and allow only for safe movements from Animal and Plant Health Agency approved importers, helping to ensure we maintain our biosecurity standards and our vital rabies free status.

We are aware of serious non-compliance in movements, exacerbated by the present crisis in Ukraine. The scheme will remain in place until the Government is satisfied risks have reduced enough to allow controls to be lifted.

This measure only applies to commercial imports including rescue animals and it does not change the [Government support for pets travelling](#) Approved Importer status is not required for those commercially importing cats, dogs and ferrets that originated from countries other than those specified.

Before legally importing animals into Great Britain, Approved Importers are required to:

- Notify APHA details of the planned movement including place of origin, name of transporter, destination of animals, the planned route and carrier at least 7 days prior to arrival
- Upload all relevant export health certificates and blood tests 2 days before arrival. This is to allow more rigorous checks to take place
- Note that imports arriving from or via the EU by rail or car must arrive at Dover or Folkestone, only on Monday to Friday between 10am and 4pm. Animals travelling by air must enter Great Britain at a Border Control Post. (Edinburgh, London Gatwick or London Heathrow).