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Pet Travel From the United States to South Africa

Last Modified:

Electronic Signature **ACCEPTED**; Original Ink Endorsement **REQUIRED**

For Accredited Veterinarians: Electronic signature **ACCEPTED**

For APHIS VMO: Original ink endorsement **REQUIRED**

USDA-accredited veterinarians can electronically issue health certificates and use VEHCS (Veterinary Export Health Certification System) to submit them to USDA for endorsement.

USDA must ink-sign and emboss the health certificate.

What This Means for You

Accredited Veterinarians: Use the links below to access or get help with VEHCS. Learn more about [how to issue export health certificates](#).

Animal Owners/Shippers: You can arrange to have your health certificate returned by mail (a prepaid, preaddressed return label must be provided during

certificate submission). The endorsed health certificate—ink-signed and embossed—must accompany the animal(s) during shipment or travel.

[VEHCS Help](#) | [VEHCS Guide](#) (7.58 MB) | [VEHCS Login](#)

Electronic Signature and Digital Endorsement ACCEPTED

For Accredited Veterinarians: Electronic signature ACCEPTED

For APHIS VMO: Digital endorsement ACCEPTED

USDA-accredited veterinarians can electronically issue health certificates and use VEHCS (Veterinary Export Health Certification System) to submit them to USDA for digital endorsement.

USDA can digitally endorse the health certificate and return it electronically.

What This Means for You

Accredited Veterinarians: Use the links below to access or get help with VEHCS. Learn more about [how to issue export health certificates](#).

Animal Owners/Shippers: The endorsed health certificate can be printed out directly from VEHCS and does **not** have to be mailed back to you. The printed, endorsed health certificate must accompany the animal(s) during shipment or travel.

[VEHCS Help](#) | [VEHCS Guide](#) (7.58 MB) | [VEHCS Login](#)

Electronic Signature ACCEPTED; Digital Endorsement for SOME COMMODITIES ONLY

For Accredited Veterinarians: Electronic signature ACCEPTED

For APHIS VMO: Digital endorsement for SOME COMMODITIES ONLY

USDA-accredited veterinarians can electronically issue health certificates and use VEHCS (Veterinary Export Health Certification System) to submit them to USDA for endorsement.

Digital endorsement varies by species—see requirements on this page for details. The health certificate either bears the original ink signature and embossed seal **or** digital signature/seal.

What This Means for You

Accredited Veterinarians: Use the links below to access or get help with VEHCS. Learn more about [how to issue export health certificates](#).

Animal Owners/Shippers: Digitally endorsed health certificates can be printed out directly from VEHCS. For non-digitally endorsed health certificates, you can arrange to have your health certificate returned by mail (a prepaid, preaddressed return label must be provided during certificate submission). A paper version of the endorsed health certificate must accompany the animal(s) during shipment or travel.

[VEHCS Help](#) | [VEHCS Guide](#) (7.58 MB) | [VEHCS Login](#)

Travel Requirements Based on Pet Type

Carefully read ALL of the requirements related to your pet on this page.

- This page provides the most recent entry requirements and can change without notice.
- It is the responsibility of the veterinarian to make sure the pet has met all health requirements of the destination country before issuing a health certificate.
- Failure to meet the requirements may result in problems gaining certificate endorsement or difficulties upon arrival in the destination country.
- Health certificates must be legible, accurate, and complete.

On April 22, 2026, the new EU legislation EU2026/131 came into effect for the export of non-commercial dog, cats, ferrets, and birds and EU 2026/848 for the commercial dogs, cats, and ferrets. There is a transition period for implementation of the new certificates. APHIS is working on the formatting of these certificates to make them publicly available, as soon as possible.

The new non-commercial health certificates will go into effect on October 1, 2026. The current certificates can be endorsed on or before September 30, 2026.

The commercial dogs, cats, and ferrets certificate will go into effect on October 17, 2026. The current certificate can be endorsed on or before October 16, 2026.

Transiting the European Union (EU)

According to EU 2026/131 Article 5, non-commercial dogs, cats, ferrets or birds transiting the EU to another country, do not need an EU health certificate.

- Only pets that qualify as non-commercial are not required to have a health certificate. If the dog is traveling unaccompanied, they need to use a commercial certificate and are not eligible for the transit exemption.
- If the pet is waiting in a pet hotel at the airport for the next flight, the pet hotel may not be considered part of the international transit zone. Each port may define the international zone differently. Please confirm with the port officials ahead of time and plan accordingly.

Alert

All pet veterinary health certificates to South Africa **MUST BE** endorsed by USDA-APHIS, including Service and Emotional Support Animals.

All disease testing, including test type, must comply with the requirements outlined on the veterinary health certificate. Failure to comply with the requirements in the veterinary health certificate may result in the pet being returned to the U.S. or euthanized.

[Expand All](#)

Cats

A veterinary import permit is required for all cats traveling to S. Africa. Veterinary import permit applications and further information can be found on the Republic of South Africa's website at <https://www.gov.za/services/import/import-animals-and-animal-products>. The completed veterinary permit applications can be sent to the Permit Office at VetPermits@daff.gov.za.

The requirements for traveling with your pet cat are described in the health certificate. If submission will be via the [Veterinary Export Health Certificate System \(VEHCS\)](#), you may navigate directly to VEHCS without downloading this PDF.

[Veterinary Health Certificate for Cats](#) (99.26 KB)

Dogs

A veterinary import permit is **required** for all dogs and cats traveling to South Africa. Veterinary import permit applications and further information can be found on the Republic of South Africa's website at <https://www.gov.za/services/import/import-animals-and-animal-products>. The completed veterinary permit applications can be sent to the Permit Office at VetPermits@daff.gov.za.

If South Africa approves the import application, they will issue an import permit and provide the required veterinary health certificate which will detail the entry requirements. Please share the import permit and veterinary health certificate with your USDA-accredited veterinarian as soon as you have received it.

U.S. origin **dogs** entering South Africa are required to be test negative for *Trypanosoma evansi* (surra) on **both** the CATT and Giemsa blood smear tests. All surra testing must occur at one of the two internationally recognized OIE Reference Laboratories for surra testing (see below for further instructions on sample submission procedures).

All other required tests must be completed at an officially approved laboratory located in the United States.

The animal's microchip number must be recorded on all laboratory reports.

APHIS endorsement of the health certificate is required after it has been issued by a USDA Accredited Veterinarian. Health certificate issuance and endorsement must occur within 10 days of the pet's travel.

[Guidance document for Dogs traveling to South Africa](#) (313.88 KB)

[Expand All](#)

Sample Submission to the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Belgium

Note: The Institute of Tropical Medicine highly recommends that U.S. sample submitters either create their own account DHL International Shipping or use a commercial laboratory (Ex: ANTECH) when sending samples to Belgium to avoid samples being returned.

***You must forward the shipment tracking number to the Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp dispatching service **in advance of the shipment:**
shipments@itg.be and surra@itg.be

Per the ITM Import Permit, the text “**Diagnostic samples - Do not open during transport**” must be printed on the parcel, along with a copy of the ITM Import Permit attached to the exterior.

Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp
Applied Technology and Production Unit
Nationalestraat 155
B-2000 Antwerpen
BELGIUM
Tel: +32 (0)3 247 63 74
surra@itg.be

PLEASE NOTE: The Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium will be closed from December 23, 2024, through January 5, 2025. No samples will be accepted during this time. The last day of routine testing for this year will be **Thursday, December 19th**. Any samples received after that time will not be tested until January 5, 2025.

[Sample Submission to the Institute of Tropical Medicine](#) (1.73 MB)

Sample Submission to the National Research Center for Protozoan Diseases, JAPAN

National Research Center for Protozoan Diseases

Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine

Inada-cho Nishi 2-13

Obihiro, Hokkaido 080-8555

JAPAN

Tel: +81-155 49.56.47 Fax: +81-155 49.56.43

ircpmi@obihiro.ac.jp

[Sample Submission to the Nat'l Research Ctr for Protozoan Diseases](#) (211.47 KB)

Birds

Birds for export using the below health certificate must:

- Have a South African import permit
- Have been born and remained in captivity
- Have remained in the United States for at least 3 months prior to export to South Africa
- Be identified by means of closed leg rings or microchips

- Undergo a 28-day pre-export isolation in a facility (which could be a private residence) that was approved by an APHIS inspector before the start of isolation. To schedule an APHIS inspection, please contact your [APHIS Endorsement Office](#).
- Tested for avian influenza and Newcastle disease by means of both tracheal/oropharyngeal **and** cloacal swabs, twice at least 14 days apart, the second test being within 7 days of departure
- Be transported to South Africa in a sealed transport that is covered in mosquito proof netting

Other requirements are explained in the model health certificate below.

[Veterinary Health Certificate for Birds](#) (173.03 KB)

Lagomorphs (Rabbits, Hares and Pikas)

A veterinary import permit is required for all lagomorphs (including rabbits, hares and pikas) traveling to South Africa. Veterinary import permit applications and further information can be found on the Republic of South Africa's website at <https://www.gov.za/services/import/import-animals-and-animal-products>. The completed veterinary permit applications can be sent to the Permit Office at VetPermits@daff.gov.za.

The requirements for traveling with your pet are described in the health certificate.

[Veterinary Health Certificate for Lagomorphs](#) (161.14 KB)

Other Pets

For pet travel requirements not listed, APHIS has not been officially informed by the foreign country about the requirements for your pet's travel. We recommend that you contact a government official of the country you are traveling to for more information.

Country of Destination Contact Information

[World Organisation for Animal Health: Members](#)

[U.S. Department of State: Foreign Embassies and Consulates](#)

■

Countries Participating in the European Union

Austria

Belgium

Bulgaria

Croatia

Cyprus

Czech Republic

Denmark

Estonia

Finland

France

Germany

Greece

Hungary

Republic of Ireland

Italy

Latvia

Lithuania

Luxembourg

Malta

Netherlands

Northern Ireland*

Norway**

Poland

Portugal

Romania
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland**

* Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom (UK), but will continue to follow European Union (EU) requirements even though the UK is no longer part of the EU.

** Norway and Switzerland are **not** part of the EU but have adopted EU legislation for import of most species of live animals.

Important Travel Considerations

Considerations for airline travel and cruises:



Airlines and shipping lines have their own policies and requirements for transporting pets. Check with your airline or shipping representative to determine what requirements they may have.

[Learn how you can improve the safety of dogs and cats during air travel.](#)

[View additional information for pet owners, airlines, and others about APHIS endorsement of international health certificates \(239.52 KB\).](#)

If pets or support animals accompany you on a cruise, you must comply with entry rules for **every** country or port where your pet or support animal exits the ship.

Will you be returning to the United States with your pet?



[View APHIS Requirements](#)

ALERT: CDC is the primary authority for dog imports. For requirements or questions about dogs entering or returning to the United States, visit the [CDC website](#).

If you are transiting (passing through) the European Union:



If your pet is traveling through (transiting) a country in the European Union (EU) on the way to a third, non-EU country, you will also need a transit health certificate for your pet for the EU. The transit health certificate will be the same as if your pet's final destination was the EU country. Use the information and steps above under "Travel Requirements Based on Pet Type" to determine which health certificate should be used. [View a list of EU countries](#).

See More See Less

Need Help?

[Guidance for Pet Owners](#)

[Read an overview of the process for taking your pet to another country and related resources.](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[View frequently asked questions about traveling with your pet.](#)

Still Have Questions?

USDA-Accredited Veterinarians

Contact a USDA-accredited veterinarian for questions about your destination country's entry requirements for pets (including any needed vaccinations, tests, or treatments); issuance of health certificates; and status updates on certificate endorsement.

[Find a USDA-Accredited Veterinarian](#)

APHIS Endorsement Offices

Contact APHIS Veterinary Export Trade Services if you have questions about endorsing an international pet health certificate. For quickest help, see [tips for pet owners and accredited veterinarians](#).

Generalist Team

Veterinary Export Trade Services

Email: askvets@usda.gov

Helpful Links:

- [Frequently Asked Questions About Pet Travel for Accredited Veterinarians](#)

Helpful Links:

- [Frequently Asked Questions About Pet Travel for Accredited Veterinarians](#)

[All Contacts](#)

Looking for Another Country?

Find your destination country requirements by using the dropdown menu below. If your country is not listed in the menu, visit [Pet Travel: Unknown Requirements](#).

Select Destination Country ▼ [Go](#)
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