

Despite the ponderous heat and whimsical driving, for many newcomers to Abu Dhabi the hardest adjustment to make is the separation from a beloved pet. Though importing pets once involved lengthy quarantines, these days it's easier than ever to bring your furry friends along ...

Application

First, apply electronically with the Ministry of Environment and Water at tinyurl.com/lqtlj8. Once you've established a user name and password, you'll find all the relevant details on the website. Then scan and email or fax the following documents (the originals aren't required):

Vaccination card or certificate showing current rabies vaccine status and the pet's age.

Your pet will need to be at least four months old at the time of travel and must have received all vaccinations, including follow-up shots. The initial rabies vaccination has to be at least 21 days old before you can apply for the permit.

A copy of the owner's passport (the photo page only — the visa page is not required).

Microchip number, either marked clearly on the vaccination card or on a microchip certificate.

The UAE requires a rabies blood test certificate for cats and dogs coming from certain countries but not most Western countries. For the complete list of countries exempt from this requirement, check out the website.

Don't apply too soon; your import permit will only be valid for one month. But don't leave it too late either — if all of your documents are in order, it should take between one and five working days to obtain the permit.

Import

You'll receive your import permit confirmation electronically from the Ministry of Environment and Water. You will then need to log back in and download the permit. Now you're ready to bring your pet into the UAE.

Pets must travel as cargo. Even if the airline you're using tells you pets can travel as accompanied baggage, UAE law prohibits animals entering the country except as manifest cargo.

You are only allowed to bring two animals per person. If you have more pets than that, you may be able to have someone import the additional animals on your behalf.

Because the entire process is done electronically, you can obtain approval before you arrive in the UAE; or you can come first and bring over your pets later.

The import fee for each animal is AED 200. If you are coming into the UAE for the first time, you should be aware that the only way to pay this fee is with an E-Dirhams card at the entry point on

arrival of the pet. You can buy an E-Dirham card from any bank or post office before reaching the entry point; or if you're arriving in the UAE for the first time, you can get one at the airport (although there is no official location at Dubai or Abu Dhabi where an e-card can be purchased on arrival).

You will also need an additional E-Dirhams card for a AED 200 veterinary check at the airport.

Exclusions

You cannot import any of the following breeds into the UAE:

any kind of Pit Bull

Japanese Tosa (Tosa Inu or Tosa Fighting Dog)

Argentinean Fighting Dog (Dogo Argentino or Argentinean Mastiff)

Brazilian Fighting Dog (Fila Brasileinoor Brazilian Mastiff)

any cross breeds with extracts of the above listed breeds

any wolf/dog hybrid

American Staffordshire Terrier

Animals that are classified as endangered species are protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Many birds, reptiles, primates, and other species fall into this restricted category. If you're not sure whether or not your animal is an endangered species, find out at www.cites.org.

CITES species may not be transported into the UAE without:

appropriate CITES documentation

prior permission from the departure country's authorities

prior permission from the UAE authorities

Quarantine

If you fail to obtain proper documentation prior to your pet's arrival into the UAE, your animal may have to spend time in quarantine until those documents are sorted. For this reason, you may want to get the professionals at the one of the specialist veterinary centres in Abu Dhabi to take care of procedure for you. Their services should include:

import permit application and collection

customs clearing and collection from the airport cargo section

boarding arrangements and/or delivery to your residence if necessary

coordination with your agent at the animal's departure location if necessary

Importing Pets

Thursday, 25 June 2009 00:00

If you find these instructions have changed or have any useful information to add, let us know via editor@AbuDhabiWeek.com and we'll post an update.

[Originally published in Abu Dhabi Week vol 2 issue 24]