

Pet Disease Risks in Europe

When travelling with your dog in Europe there are a number of diseases that your pet must be coming in to contact with. There are a number of steps that you can take to reduce the risks to your pet.

What are the main disease risks?

The main disease risks on the continent are protozoal diseases Babesiosis, Leishmaniasis, and Ehrlichiosis and the parasitic disease heartworm *Dirofilaria*.

All of these diseases are transmitted by insects and are potentially life threatening. They are found in different parts of Europe and at different times of year.

Leishmania

This is transmitted by a biting fly called the Sand Fly.

It is found in the areas around the Mediterranean but the incidence is gradually spreading further.

The disease can present in a number of ways such as weight loss, skin and eye lesions, lameness and enlarged lymph nodes. Symptoms may not develop for some time after infection and can be difficult to treat or come and go over many years.



Heartworm

Heartworm (*dirofilaria*) is transmitted by mosquitoes.

It is found in large areas of southern Europe but is creeping further north.

Heartworms live in the heart and large blood vessels causing heart failure and breathing problems. The symptoms occur about 6-12 months after infection when the worms have built up to large numbers. Treatment is difficult as large numbers of dead worms are as serious as the problems they cause when alive therefore prevention is the key with this disease



Ehrlichia and Babesia

Ehrlichia and *Babesia* are transmitted by infected tick bites.

Ehrlichia is found in the countries around the Mediterranean and *Babesia* throughout Europe

Babesia causes anaemia and signs include weakness, panting, red urine and collapse. Symptoms usually occur 2-3 weeks after infection.

Ehrlichia affects the white blood cells and affected dogs develop a fever, some may have long term problems with their immune system. Symptoms occur 1-3 weeks after infection.



Prevention

The main way we can reduce the risk of these diseases is by trying to prevent being bitten by the insect involved in their transmission. Heartworm treatment is aimed at preventing the parasite building up in the bloodstream.

Sandfly/ mosquitoes – use an insect repellent collar or insect repellent spray at regular intervals. Keep your dog indoors in the evening and at night as sandflies prefer the cooler times of day.

Ticks – use a tick treatment at the correct intervals to kill ticks within the first 24 hours. A daily check should be made of your dog to identify any ticks - any ticks found should be removed immediately.

Our Recommendations

If you are travelling to Europe with your pet and reduce the risk to your pet we would recommend the following measures:

Heartworm treatment – one week before travel and at monthly interval including one treatment when back in the UK. **ADVOCATE**

Tick and Sandfly prevention – a repellent collar is available that kills ticks (and fleas) for up to 6 months. It also acts as a repellent to sandflies. They are odourless and waterproof. **SCALIBOR**

If you are travelling for a long period of time to the Mediterranean region there is now a vaccine available against Leishmania which may be advisable. **CANILEISH (NEED TO ORDER)**

3 VACCINES 3 WEEKS APART, 4 WEEK ONSET OF IMMUNITY SO
NEED TO BE DONE 13 WEEKS BEFORE TRAVEL