

## **Written Evidence submitted by Cats Protection (maab0031)**

Cats Protection is the UK largest cat welfare charity. In 2019 the charity helped 191,000 cats and kittens through its national network of around 230 volunteer-run branches and 36 centres.

### **1. Does the UK have sufficient resources and capacity to certify, record and inspect animal movements across its borders?**

Resources are currently not allocated adequately to robustly inspect animal movements. The checks are currently carried out by personnel who are not trained to age cats or judge fraudulent passport entries. Furthermore, there are no visual checks on animals being imported. Instead, carriers just check the pet passport, and the transporters of the cat scan the microchip to make sure it matches that on the passport, without a visual check of the animal.

### **2. How effectively will the UK be able to conduct animal disease surveillance and respond to outbreaks?**

Under the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) there has been a rapid increase in the number of declared cats entering the UK and the number of undeclared kittens and cats is unknown. The number of cats and kittens declared as coming into Great Britain under PETS increased from 8,280 in 2011 to 31,890 in 2019 (the number of cats entering the UK in 2020 was 25,259 which is likely to be lower than the previous year due to the pandemic).

This makes rigorous checks to prevent outbreaks of animal disease and zoonotic diseases more important than ever. We would like to see the creation of a national database for cats entering the UK, including the scanning of microchips to increase traceability in the event of a public and/or feline health scare.

### **3. What impact will the new UK-EU agreement have on moving animals across the Irish border and between GB and the EU/Northern Ireland?**

No information available.

### **4. How should the Government balance animal health and welfare alongside economic interests?**

The Government should strive to have the highest animal health and welfare standards possible and cost options that balance risks to animal and public health with economic costs.

#### **Domestic animals:**

### **7. How will Great Britain leaving the EU Pet Travel Scheme affect both legal and illegal movements of animals between GB and the EU/NI**

Leaving the EU Pet Travel Scheme means presents the opportunity for the UK to enhance pet welfare post-Brexit through improvement of the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) to reduce the illegal movement of animals and ensure better disease control for animals entering legally. Cats Protection is calling for the reintroduction of tick and tapeworm treatment for cats entering the UK as both these parasites pose significant public health threats.

Currently the UK is classified as being free of the zoonotic tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis*. However, there is significant prevalence in cats in central European countries

such as France, Switzerland and Germany and without compulsory tapeworm treatment of cats entering the UK, this dangerous parasite could become endemic in the UK. Ticks from outside the UK may also carry diseases that are not endemic in the UK's cat yet such as babesiosis and ehrlichiosis. It is important we protect our cats from these diseases as they have no natural immunity to them.

Cats Protection also supports the UK requiring rabies antibody titre testing of all cats, dogs and ferrets obtaining a passport as part of any UK scheme on pets entering the UK. This requirement was dropped from PETS in 2011 even from EU countries that are not rabies-free. The 12 week waiting period between the antibody test and entry into the UK should be reinstated to make sure cats were not infected with rabies before vaccination.

**8. Are the current rules and checks on the movement of domestic animals strong enough to prevent illegal activity? If not, what could be improved?**

No, the current rules and checks are not strong enough. The rules could be improved by requiring rabies antibody titre testing of all cats, dogs and ferrets obtaining a passport for pets entering the UK as mentioned above. This means that young puppies and kittens would not be able to enter the UK legally; most would be about 6 months old after the holding period as vaccination cannot take place until they are 12 weeks of age. Requiring rabies antibody titre testing would require kittens (and puppies) entering the UK under the PETS scheme to be 6 months or older which would help deter the smuggling in of kittens and puppies via that scheme and make it more obvious.

Cats Protection has some evidence from quarantine establishments and media reports of cats being smuggled into the UK from the EU, though this is not as common as puppy smuggling. The charity is also aware of adverts on Facebook for cats for sale and delivery to the UK from EU countries, with the following phrases commonly used "worldwide shipping", "international shipping", "available worldwide".

March 2021