Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Notes for Guidance for Animal Health Certificate for the non-commercial movement into a Member State from a territory or third country of dogs, cats, or ferrets in accordance with Article 18 and Article 19 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council

4 September 2026

Change Notice

The following changes have been made to Version 8 of this document:

- Further amendments have been made to this document to resolve queries received from Official Veterinarians with the certification requirements for the new Animal Health Certificate (AHC) templates. OVs are advised to refer to this document when certifying the new AHC templates

Contents

1. Applicable Legislation 2
2. Scope of the Certificate 2
3. Certification by an Official Veterinarian (OV) 3
4. Validity of the Certificate 3
5. Declaration of Non-Commercial Movement (declaration referred to in Article 18(3) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131) 4
6. Declaration of Authorised Person (Declaration referred to in Article 4 of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131) 5
7. Declaration of Transit Conditions and Rabies Exposure (Declaration referred to in Article 17, point (2)(c), of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131) 6
8. Certified Copies 7
9. Completing the Certificate 7

10. Pet Dogs Returning to Great Britain 12
11. Welfare 12
12. Legal Statement 13
13. Ordering More Animal Health Certificate Reference Numbers 13
14. Disclaimer 13

No: 8233 NFG

Model Animal Health Certificate (AHC) for the non-commercial movement into a Member State from a territory or third country of dogs, cats, or ferrets in accordance with Article 18 and Article 19 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE (NFG) FOR THE CERTIFYING OFFICIAL VETERINARIAN

1. Applicable Legislation

- Regulation (EU) 2016/429 as amended.
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131.
- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/705.

Any EU legislation referenced in the certificate must be complied with and EU legislation can be accessed on the following link. You should ensure you use the latest consolidated version including all updates and amendments: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html

IMPORTANT

These notes provide guidance to Official Veterinarians (OV). The NFG should have been issued to the OV together with the relevant AHC for the non-commercial movement into a Member State from a territory or third country of dogs, cats, or ferrets in accordance with Article 18 and Article 19 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

2. Scope of the Certificate

This AHC may be used for the non-commercial movement into an EU Member State from a territory or third country of dogs, cats, or ferrets in accordance with Article 18 and Article 19 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council. This certificate may also be used for non-commercial movements into Northern Ireland (NI) from Great Britain, as non-commercial pet travel in Northern Ireland will continue to adhere to Regulation (EU) 2016/429. However, where the pet is travelling only to NI and not onwards to an EU Member State, a Northern Ireland Pet Travel Document may be used instead.

The AHC is intended for the movement of up to five such pets. However, there is an option to certify more than five pets in specific circumstances detailed in the certificate (e.g. pets over six months old that are taking part in competitions). Certificates for movements to other countries that are not EU Member States can be found on GOV.UK.

A non-commercial movement is defined in Regulation (EU) 2016/429 as any movement of a pet animal accompanying its owner and which:

a. does not have as its aim either the sale of or another form of transfer of ownership of the pet animal concerned; and
b. is part of the movement of the pet owner:
    - either under his direct responsibility; or
    - under the responsibility of an authorised person, in cases where the pet animal is physically separated from the pet owner.

3. Certification by an Official Veterinarian (OV)

In Great Britain, this certificate shall be signed by an Official Veterinarian of the Department or by an Official Veterinarian (OV) appointed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Scottish Government or the Welsh Government as such and holding the appropriate Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary) (OCQ(V)) authorisation.

OVs must sign and stamp the veterinary certificate with the OV stamp in ink in a different colour to that of the printing.

You are advised to keep a copy of every AHC you issue for three years. The APHA Centre for International Trade Carlisle (CITC) may ask to review copies of any AHCs you have issued.

Further guidance for OVs on completing export certification is available here: Official Veterinarian Training

4. Validity of the Certificate

This certificate is valid for movements of up to five dogs, cats or ferrets, (and a mix of species is permissible), from Great Britain to an EU Member State (but see scope above) and is valid for 10 days from the date of issue by the Official Veterinarian.

The date of signing the certificate should be considered as day 1, with the certificate being valid up to and including day 10. For example, if signed on 1st of the month, the certificate will be valid until and including the 10th of the month. When in doubt, the pet owner should ask the authority of the point of entry in advance of the movement.

Pets must enter the EU via a designated **Travellers' Point of Entry (TPE)** (see List of TPEs: https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/pet-movement/eu-legislation/noncommercial-non-eu/tpe_en).

Pets need an AHC written in one of the official languages of the EU Member State in which it will enter the EU and in English. For example, a pet entering the EU in France would need an AHC in French and English. All AHCs used to enter the EU, except the English only AHC, are dual language (they are written in English as well as one of the official languages of the Member State of entry).

If a pet is travelling DIRECT to an EU country with multiple languages, then the pet owner needs to confirm with the competent authority at the relevant TPE which language they should use.

Following documentary and identity checks by the competent authority at a designated TPE this certificate is valid **for six months** for onward movement between EU Member States or until **the date of expiry of the validity of the anti-rabies vaccination** (whichever is earlier).

The certificate is also valid for return to Great Britain from the EU within six months of the date of issue or until the date of expiry of the validity of the anti-rabies vaccination (whichever is earlier), provided that, for dogs, appropriate tapeworm treatment is administered 24 - 120 hours before re-entering Great Britain and endorsed on the certificate by the administering veterinarian in the EU.

Any additional rabies vaccinations given in the EU will not extend the validity period of the AHC. The owner should ensure that the pets rabies vaccinations are valid for the duration of the trip. If the pet needs a booster vaccine whilst abroad, it will need to get a Great Britain Pet Health Certificate for re-entry.

5. <u>Declaration of Non-Commercial Movement</u> (declaration referred to in Article 18(3) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131)

A written **declaration** must be attached to this certificate confirming the non-commercial nature of the movement **and the OV must be content this is the case**. A copy of this declaration is included at the end of the certificate (Section A).

For the movement to qualify as non-commercial, the pet(s) must travel with either:

- the pet owner, or
- a person authorised in writing by the owner to carry out the movement on the owner's behalf.

If an authorised person accompanies the pet(s), the owner must travel within five days before or after the pet(s) movement. If the owner does not travel within this period, the pet must be moved under the commercial rules.

The 'pet owner' (hereafter refer as owner) is defined as the natural person indicated as the owner (singular) on **the identification document.**

The ‘authorised person’ is any natural person who has authorisation in writing from the pet owner to carry out the non-commercial movement of the pet animal on behalf of the pet owner.

The declaration must be completed and signed by either the pet owner or the authorised person to carry out the movement.

They must:

- enter their name (preferably in block capitals) on the dotted line following 'I, the undersigned'
- delete all statements marked with a (1) that do not apply
    - this includes deleting the non-applicable options to indicate:
        - Who is signing the document and who is responsible for the animal during the non-commercial movement (either the owner or the natural person who has authorisation in writing from the owner to carry out the non-commercial movement on behalf of the owner)
- complete the table to include each animal’s ID number and the corresponding AHC reference number for the movement
- state the place and date of signature, (place should include country and county as minimum)
- sign at the end of the declaration

This declaration itself will contain a wet signed OV’s signature and stamp at the page numbering as part of the general and whole health certification.

6. Declaration of Authorised Person (Declaration referred to in Article 4 of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131)

If a person other than the owner is transporting the pet, a written **declaration** must be attached to this certificate confirming the natural person has authorisation from the pet owner to carry out the non-commercial movement of the pet animal on behalf of the pet owner.

A blank copy of this declaration can be requested from APHA by completing the pet travel contact form. The declaration is required in one of the official languages of the EU Member State in which it will enter the EU and in English.

The declaration must be completed by the owner.

They must:

- Enter their name in block capitals on the dotted line following ‘I, the undersigned’
- Enter the name of the natural person in block capitals that is authorised to carry out the non-commercial movement on behalf of the pet owner
- complete the table to include each animal’s ID number and the corresponding AHC reference number for the movement

- state the place and date of signature, (place should include country and county as minimum)
- sign at the end of the declaration
- enter the date of movement of the owner (this date must be within five days either side of the pet's movement)

It is advised that the authorised person carries proof of the pet owner's movement date during their travel.

OVs are not required to sign and stamp the authorised person declaration.

GUIDANCE FOR ASSISTANCE DOGS: Where someone is travelling with their assistance dog, but they are not the legal owner (as is common where the assistance dog organisation retains ownership), the EU Commission has clarified that the person travelling with the dog can be considered the owner for the purpose of the declaration. The traveller should check the rules with the competent authority of the country of destination.

7. Declaration of Transit Conditions and Rabies Exposure (Declaration referred to in Article 17, point (2)(c), of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131)

Where pet animals originating from a third country or territory listed in the Annexes to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/636 transit through a third country or territory that is not listed in those Annexes, the rabies antibody titration test is not required if the conditions in Article 17(2)(c) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131 are met.

To rely on this derogation, the pet owner or authorised person must complete and sign the written declaration accompanying the Animal Health Certificate, confirming that, during transit, the pet animals:

- had no contact with animals of species susceptible to rabies; and
- remained secured within a means of transport or within the perimeter of an international airport or port.

This declaration must be completed by the pet owner or authorised person.

They must:

- enter their full name in block capitals on the dotted line following 'I, the undersigned'
  delete as appropriate to indicate whether they are the owner or a natural person authorised in writing by the owner
- ensure that the pet animals listed correspond to those in the animal health certificate
- complete the table to include each animal's transponder alphanumeric code (if present) and the corresponding animal health certificate number

- state the place and date of signature (the place should include at least country and locality)
- sign at the end of the declaration

8. Certified Copies

The certificate must also be accompanied by **OV certified copies** of:

- the identification and vaccination details (e.g. a **copy** of all relevant sections of a vaccination card/EU pet passport)

To make these certified copies, the certifying OV should photocopy the original document twice. On each copy, the OV should write the words ‘Certified Copy’ in the top right-hand corner and initial and add their OV stamp. The OV should attach one certified copy to the certificate and retain one copy along with their copy of the AHC. Retaining such copies may help provide future evidence in cases where certificate tampering is suspected.

Each page of the certificate, declaration and certified copies of supporting documentation must have the certificate reference number at the top of each page. Each page must be numbered in the format 'Page x of y', where 'x' is the relevant page and 'y' the total number of pages, at the bottom of each page. Any blank page should be included in sequential numbering.

All documentation should be stapled together, and all pages (as opposed to sheets of paper) must be signed and stamped once individually. This is in addition to any other required stamps such as permitted alterations, (which must be stamped and initialled). There is no requirement to fan stamp.

9. Completing the Certificate

Please ensure that the AHC is read in full, including all footnotes.

Please pay special attention to footnote (8) (this is the biggest reason for refusal of entry).

Please double check information on the AHC matches completely the information on all associated documents.

The certificate should be completed in BLOCK CAPITAL LETTERS. OVs must ensure that the animal’s ID is verified (e.g. by scanning the microchip) **before** any entry is made in the AHC and that the date of microchip implantation (or tattoo if applied before 3 July 2011) is **on or before the date of the rabies vaccination.**

If the date of microchip implantation is unknown, the date of a microchip reading must be detailed, and this must be on or before the date of the rabies vaccination.

Note: If a tattoo is used to prove animal ID the OV must verify that it is clearly legible and that it was applied before 3 July 2011.

PART I: Details of the Consignment

Please complete Part I of the certificate other than those boxes which are struck through with a diagonal line or prepopulated.

The following boxes should be struck through by default on the health certification: I.2.a, I.6, I.8, I.9, I.10, I.11, I.12, I.13, I.14, I.15, I.16, I.17, I.21, I.22, I.23, I.24, I.26, I.27. These boxes which have been struck through on this page do not need OV stamp and initial.

I.1 Consignor

Details of owner

I.3 Central competent authority

Defra

I.4 Local competent authority

Animal and Plant Health Agency for export from Great Britain

I.5 Consignee

This box must indicate the first country of entry into the EU, (an EU Member state or Northern Ireland) – for example if the traveller is going to Portugal via France, France must be indicated on the certificate (e.g. in the Address section, a full address is not essential). Consignee name should be the same as the consignor (Box I.1) as change of ownership is not permitted for a non-commercial movement.

I.18 Description of commodity

Enter 'Pet dogs', 'Pet cats' and/or 'Pet Ferrets' as applicable

I.20 Quantity

Insert number of pet animals (up to five)

I.25 Commodity Certified for

Tick the box 'Pets' to certify that the consignment contains only pet animals

I.28 Identification of the Commodity

In the free text box include the following fields and the relevant data to identify the consignment:

- Species (scientific name):

    - Dogs (Canis lupus familiaris)
    - Cats (Felis silvestris catus)
    - Ferrets (Mustela putorius furo)
- Sex: as appropriate
- Colour: as appropriate
- Breed: as stated by owner and agreed by OV
- Identification number: microchip number (or tattoo number, if it was applied before 03/07/2011)
- Identification system: Use the term 'Transponder' for a microchip or 'Tattoo'
- Date of Birth: as stated by owner and as far as OV can confirm on the basis of enquiries (e.g. dentition check) and evidence available

PART II: Certification Health Information

The OV signing the certificate must ensure that the health attestations set out in Part II of the health certificate have been complied with.

OVs must ensure that they are aware of the provisions of the annex set out in Commission Delegate Regulation (EU) 2026/131, which amends Annex VII to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/688, laying down the requirements on anti-rabies vaccinations.

OVs must ensure that they are aware of the provisions of Annex XXI to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692, laying down the requirements on treatments for the consignment against *Echinococcus multilocularis*.

The animal does need to be physically presented to the practice so that the OV can verify the ID of the animal before the AHC can be signed (i.e. scan the microchip and be sure that the relevant records match the right animal). This should be done by the OV or by another veterinarian who can pass this information to the OV.

In section II.2

The requirement has two elements. The OV must be satisfied that the animal:

1. **shows no signs of disease**; and
2. **is fit for the intended non-commercial movement**.

The first element reflects the animal-health purpose of **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131**, including mitigating the risk of spreading transmissible animal diseases.

The second requires a separate clinical assessment of whether the animal is fit to undertake the proposed journey, taking account of its condition and the nature of that journey. **Article 14(a)** of **Regulation 2026/131** similarly requires the animal to show no obvious signs of disease and to be fit for the non-commercial movement.

The date to be entered in paragraph II.2 is the date of clinical inspection, not the date of expected movement to the EU.

Applying a 'Z' across optional or contextual statements, sections or paragraphs that are not relevant (rather than crossing out line by line) is also permitted. Some certificates give a tick box which will automatically delete the option that is not relevant. These must then be individually initialled and stamped by the OV to confirm the OV selection.

Deletions on the owner declaration (confirming non-commercial movement) is for the owner/natural person to delete and therefore these particular deletions do not require OV stamp and initial. However the page must be signed and stamped by the OV as part of the certification by the page numbering in the usual way.

Boxes within tables that do not apply should be struck through with a single diagonal line with the exception, for dogs only, of boxes in the anti-tapeworm treatment table referred to in clause **II.4** (see below).

II. Health information

OVs must read each statement carefully.

In the first paragraph, OVs completing the certificate **should ensure** that there is a strike through 'veterinarian authorised by the competent authority' in both the English text and the dual language text (where used).

II.3 A non-OV can administer a rabies vaccination, but they must confirm the microchip before vaccination and ensure they make clinical records covering the vaccination. An OV can certify the vaccination for the purposes of completing an AHC based on these records if the OV is satisfied that the records are correct. However, if the records are not believed to be sufficient e.g. no record of microchip reading, then the OV may refuse to certify and should administer another vaccination themselves.

The II.3 clause referring to animals at least 12 weeks old should be completed as appropriate. The II.3 clause contains two sub-clauses:

- the first one is applicable to GB, as GB is listed in Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/636. In the case that pets from GB are moved into an EU member state through a third country or territory not listed in that annex, the pet owner or authorised person must provide a signed declaration as described in point 7 of this guidance.
- The second one is applicable to GB when the pets are scheduled to be moved into an EU member state through a third country or territory not listed in Annex I or Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/636 and the conditions in the declaration as described in point 7 of this guidance cannot be met (e.g. the pet will not remain within the perimeter of the international zone of a port or an airport).

Note: the certificate requires at least 21 days* to have elapsed following the completion of the primary course of anti-rabies vaccination, i.e. before the certificate can be certified.

*The period of validity of the vaccine starts from the establishment of protective immunity, in accordance with the manufacturer instructions. This must be at least 21 days following completion of the vaccination protocol required by the manufacturer for the primary vaccination. Please note, if the manufacturer states the protective immunity is demonstrated after 21 days then the animal must be certified after the onset of protective immunity established by the manufacturer.

The date of completion of the primary course of anti-rabies vaccination is considered as day 0. The day that the certificate can be certified is day 21. For example, if the primary vaccination course is completed on the first day of the month, the certificate can be certified from day 22 of the month. When in doubt, the owner should ask the authority of the point of entry in advance of the movement.

The box detailing rabies vaccination information must contain details of the current anti-rabies vaccination.

Note: The certificate requires that animals were at least 12 weeks old at the time of vaccination against rabies. To calculate age, the date of birth should be considered as day 0. For example, if your pet was born on 1 May, the earliest your pet could be vaccinated would be 24 July.

Note: New EU rules in Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/131 mean that the derogation for young, unvaccinated pets only applies to movements between Member States. For pets entering the EU from a third country (e.g. GB) the animal must meet the standard rabies vaccination requirements. This means animals entering the EU from GB must be at least 15 weeks old before they can satisfy entry requirements. As such, for movements from GB into the EU, vets should no longer certify an AHC for an animal under 15 weeks old.

Note: APHA are becoming increasingly aware of the use of fraudulent or AI-altered rabies vaccination records presented by pet owners to obtain AHCs.

If you have any concerns regarding any supporting documentation before AHC certification, please contact the public facing Intel Unit: **intelunit@apha.gov.uk** who will take these cases forward.

II.4 – This section is for dogs only.

Dogs travelling from GB to EU listed tapeworm free countries including Northern Ireland, Malta, Ireland, Finland, and Norway must be treated for tapeworm prior to travel in accordance with EU requirements. Tapeworm treatment is not required for dogs travelling from GB to non-‘tapeworm free’ countries in the EU. Where tapeworm treatment is given, the second II.4 clause should be struck through and the table containing the details of anti-echinococcus treatment given should be fully completed. Where tapeworm treatment is not given then the first II.4 clause should be struck through but the boxes in the anti-echinococcus treatment table should be left blank (i.e. not struck through) in order to permit future anti-tapeworm treatments to be recorded if required (e.g. prior to re-entry into the UK from a non-‘tapeworm free’ country).

If it is not possible to fit in the information in print, handwriting may be permitted but it is advisable to confirm with the relevant TPE.

The box below the OV signature box at the end of the certificate for 'endorsement by the competent authority' should be struck through with a diagonal line as this is not necessary when the certificate is signed by an OV (this may have already been done).

10. Pet Dogs Returning to Great Britain

Before returning to GB, dogs must be treated against the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis* by a veterinarian (who may or may not be an Official Veterinarian) who is registered with the veterinary professional body in the country in which the treatment is administered. **Pets travelling directly to GB from Northern Ireland, Finland, Ireland, Malta, or Norway are exempt from this treatment.**

The treatment must be carried out not less than 24 hours and not more than 120 hours before the pet is landed.

The administering veterinarian should record tapeworm treatments by completing the table referred to in clause II.4 of the certificate.

If the veterinarian administering the treatment is an Official Veterinarian, they should apply their OV stamp in the box. If the veterinarian is not an OV they should use their practice stamp.

The treatment used must contain praziquantel or an equivalent containing a product (active substance) proven to be effective against *Echinococcus multilocularis.*

Dogs leaving GB for a short trip (less than five days) to the EU will likely need to have this treatment administered prior to departure from GB. Pet owners should be reminded that they must wait for 24 hours after the dog receives the treatment before re-entering GB and must return within 120 hours of the treatment time or the dog will be required to get another treatment in the EU.

It is advisable in this case that dogs receive a follow up treatment 28 days later.

11. Welfare

Welfare conditions during transport are laid down by Council Regulation EC 1/2005, implemented in England by The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006, and parallel legislation in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Exporters must comply with welfare laws in GB relating to the export of animals. If transported by air, animals should be transported in accordance with International Air Transport Association (IATA) standards. Information about the necessary requirements may be obtained from the Animal Welfare Team at any of the offices mentioned below:

England, Scotland, and Wales

Centre for International Trade
Animal and Plant Health Agency
Eden Bridge House
Lowther Street
Carlisle, CA3 8DX

Tel: 03000 200 301

Email: wit@apha.gov.uk

Northern Ireland

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Animal Welfare Section
Ballykelly House
111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly
Limavady
BT49 9HP

Tel: 0300 2007840

Email: WITPolicy@daera-ni.gov.uk

12. Legal Statement

The existing EU legislation that governs movements into GB has become domestic 'retained EU law' under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. References in our guidance and certification to such EU instruments should be taken to be references to this 'retained EU law'.

13. Ordering More Animal Health Certificate Reference Numbers

To request more AHC Unique Certificate Numbers please complete the (PETS10) order form available on Improve International: https://www.improve-ov.com/instructions/instructions.php?ta=ta_search and email it to the PetPassports.Carlisle@apha.gov.uk mailbox.

You must complete all the sections on the (PETS10) order form.

14. Disclaimer

This certificate and NFG are provided on the basis of information available at the time and may not necessarily comply fully with the requirements of the importing country. It is the exporter's responsibility to check the certificate against any relevant import permit or any advice provided by the competent authority in the importing country. If these do not match, the exporter should contact the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) in Carlisle, contact details can be found using the link below:

https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-agency

© Crown copyright 2021

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3. To view this licence visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/ or email PSI@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications

If you have any enquiries regarding this publication fill in the pet travel contact form.

PB 8233 NFG