



Hawaii is a rabies free state. Importation of dogs, cats and other carnivores into Hawaii is governed by Chapter 4-29 of the State of Hawaii, Department of Agriculture ("DOA") Administrative Rules. This law says that these animals are required to complete a 120-day confinement in the State Animal Quarantine Station. Thankfully, the law was recently changed such that animals may qualify for a 30-day or new 5-day or less quarantine if specific pre-arrival and post-arrival requirements are met. Below, an attempt will be made to demystify the rationale behind Hawaii's quarantine rules and simplify the recently amended requirements for entry.

Putting the Rules in Perspective

Hawaii has elected to follow a modified version of the rabies quarantine standards adopted by the International Office of Epizootics (OIE), or World Organization for Animal Health. The OIE calls upon rabies free countries to have certain entry requirements for animals originating from countries considered to be infected. These basically include: 1) rabies vaccinations; 2) a serum blood test to show that the rabies vaccine was effective; 3) a quarantine period following a successful serum blood test of at least 3 months but not more than 24 months prior to entry; and 4) some sort of permanent identification, preferably a micro-chip to show that the animal seeking entry was in fact that animal that was vaccinated, serum tested and quarantined. A current health certificate from a licensed veterinarian attesting to the health, vaccination status and serum testing status of the animal is also required. (See OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, 2006, Article 2.2.5.5)

Hawaii requires the OIE-FAVN sero-

Passport To Paradise

Examining Hawaii's Animal Quarantine Rules

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logical test, which was developed in France. The OIE-FAVN test is used to confirm a "successful" vaccination, demonstrated by the presence of antibodies to the rabies virus. Interestingly, the OIE-FAVN test is unable to determine whether the presence of serum antibodies is due to stimulated immunity from a rabies vaccine or exposure to natural infection. This is why a quarantine period is also required following a successful test result (presumably, to be completely certain serum antibodies are due to the vaccine). Recent diagnostic advances have reportedly been made which may help differentiate vaccinated animals from those exposed to the virus naturally. (See OIE International Conference on the Control of Infectious Animal Diseases by Vaccination, Buenos Aires, April 2004, Conclusions and Recommendations) Perhaps these advances could soon lead to a reduction in the required quarantine periods.

Hawaii currently requires a minimum quarantine period of 4 months/120 days following a successful serum blood test. To date, the only laboratory in the United States able to perform the OIE-FAVN serological test is located at the University of Kansas (although the Department of Defense has a lab that will perform the test for members of the U.S. military.)

Entry Requirements for Pets Originating Outside Hawaii

The DOA has the following entry requirements for dogs and cats originating from outside the State of Hawaii in order to avoid quarantine:

- 1) Two (2) rabies vaccinations in the animal's lifetime. The two vaccinations must have been administered more than 90 days apart. In addition, the most recent vaccination must be administered at least 90 days prior to the pet's arrival in Hawaii, but not more than 1 year for a 1-year rabies vaccine, or, at least 90 days prior to the pet's arrival in Hawaii, but not more than 3 years for a 3-year rabies vaccine. This is to insure that the vaccine is effective and has not expired upon entry;

- 2) Implantation of an electronic micro-chip;

- 3) A OIE-FAVN serum antibody test. A passing antibody test must be obtained at least 120 days before the animal's arrival in Hawaii. The test result must show a serum antibody titer greater than or equal to 0.5 IU/ml, and include

the pet's electronic micro-chip number. A passing test is good for 3 years; AND

- 4) A health certificate, in English, which was completed no more than 14 days prior to the animal's arrival in Hawaii which includes: a) the rabies vaccine name, lot and serial number, booster interval, vaccination date and expiration date; b) a statement that the animal is pest-free and has been treated for ticks with a product containing Fipronil no more than 14 days prior to the animal's arrival in Hawaii. Original rabies vaccination certificates must also be presented upon entry.

Failure to fully comply with the above requirements will result in your pet being subject to quarantine in the State facility. It is especially important to allow enough time for a minimum 120 day waiting period after your pet has passed its OIE-FAVN antibody test. Animals arriving in Hawaii prior to the completion of the 120 waiting period will be quarantined for the remainder of the 120-day waiting period.

It is also important to recognize that as of this writing, no exceptions are made for puppies or kittens. Thus, a puppy or kitten originating from a non-rabies free country will likely be at least 9 months of age prior to entering Hawaii without quarantine.

Re-Entry Requirements for Pets Originating in Hawaii

Pet owners wishing to travel with their pets outside the State of Hawaii are subject to the following requirements in order to avoid their animals being quarantined upon re-entry:

- 1) Two (2) rabies vaccinations in the animal's lifetime. The two vaccinations must have been administered more than 90 days apart. In addition, the most recent vaccination must be administered at least 14 days prior to the pet's departure from Hawaii, but not more than 1 year for a 1-year rabies vaccine, or, at least 14 days prior to the pet's departure from Hawaii, but not more than 3 years for a 3-year rabies vaccine.

- 2) Implantation of an electronic micro-chip;

- 3) A OIE-FAVN serum antibody test. A passing antibody test must be obtained at least 14 days before departing from Hawaii. The test result must show a serum antibody titer greater than or equal to 0.5 IU/ml, and include the pet's electronic micro-chip number. A passing test is good for 3 years;

Passport To Paradise

Page 2, continued

4) A health certificate issued by your veterinarian in Hawaii which contains your pet's Hawaii address and date of departure from Hawaii, in addition to original copies of rabies vaccination certificates and OIE-FAVN test result.

Exceptions for Pets Originating from Rabies-Free Countries and Service Animals

The Hawaii DOA considers the British Isles, Australia, Guam and New Zealand to be "rabies free." It is important to recognize that there is no one universally agreed upon list of rabies free countries. Each country (or state) has its own criteria for determining which countries and/or territories it considers to be rabies free.

Dogs and cats may enter Hawaii directly from these countries as long as they are shipped in sealed containers and are accompa-

nied by health certificates, affidavits of the owner stating that the animal has not been outside the country of origin in the preceding six months, as well as an affidavit from the airline captain that the animal was transported in one aircraft and was not off-loaded (unless transport to another aircraft was necessary).

There are also exceptions made for service animals traveling with people with disabilities.

Anyone considering traveling with pets to or from Hawaii should consult the "Hawaii Rabies Quarantine Information Brochure" published by the DOA for a complete list of entry requirements. This is strongly recommended to reduce the possibility of any unpleasant surprises at the airport upon your arrival in Hawaii.

While the DOA is certainly to be commended for their recent efforts to relax the quarantine laws, hopefully it will continue to examine the rules with an aim towards applying sound science to its risk management decisions and reducing the time pets must be kept away from their families.

To read the Hawaii Department of Agriculture's Brochure on quarantine go to www.hawaii.gov/hdoa/ai/ags/info and click on the link to "Hawaii Rabies Quarantine information Brochure."

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