

# Traveling To Rabies-Controlled Areas



If you are planning to visit, or move to an island nation or state such as Hawaii, American Samoa, Tahiti, New Zealand, Japan, Australia or the UK, You must read the following information very carefully.

Many island nations, states and territories are free of rabies virus. Many are nearly free of it and highly regulate it in an effort to free themselves of it. Because rabies is capable of infecting every mammal used by humans for food, fur and companionship, as well as humans, and a human being with rabies has essentially zero chance of surviving the infection without major brain damage, if they survive at all. Countries that are free of rabies do not mess around about keeping rabies out.

Because of this hassle you will want to start preparations for traveling to one of these rzes with your pet at least 6 MONTHS IN ADVANCE. You can do it in less time but run the risk of some part of your pets paperwork not being perfectly completed which

leaves you in the unpleasant situation of your pet being quarantined, against your will but at your expense, or cutting your trip short so you can take your pet back home or leaving your pet at home with incomplete paperwork. The following website will give you an idea of how serious rabies free areas are about quarantining animals to prevent rabies from entering their nation/state/territory.

<https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/ai/aqs/animal-quarantine-information-page/>

Most rabies free countries have stringent requirements about what is known as a Rabies FAVN (pronounced fav'n) test. FAVN stands for Fluorescent Antibody Virus Neutralization. This is the only test in the world certified as proof that the antibodies generated by a rabies vaccine are fully capable of neutralizing the virus, thus preventing an animal from being infected by the rabies virus. If the titer, or level of such antibodies in the blood, of your pet is not sufficiently high your pet will not be allowed entry into the nation/state/territory in question. There is only one laboratory in the United States that is certified and allowed to perform this test. Completing this test is time consuming and the lab does not allow 'rush' orders.

Most rabies free countries also have stringent requirements about the timing of this test relative to your pets most recent rabies vaccine, and your planned entry date into the country in question. You have to wait a sufficient length of time after the vaccine to perform the test, and then you need to wait for the results to come back from the laboratory before you can even be sure if the last vaccine was effective enough to allow your pet to be imported.

What often ends up happening is a pet owner visits us to start plans for traveling to a rabies-controlled area, without being aware of any of these regulations, only to discover their pet's rabies vaccine is overdue. So, we have to vaccinate the pet for rabies, and wait for the prescribed length of time before submitting the rabies FAVN test. Then we have to wait for the results. By this time the date set for the trip has passed and the owner left their pet at home because the owner did not allow the sufficient time in advance of the trip to complete all these steps and their associated waiting periods. This web article is our attempt to educate our clientele about this complex and time consuming process.

These rules apply to assistance animals, therapy animals, service animals, and emotional support animals just like they do to pets. DO NOT ASSUME that you will be granted an exception simply because you need to keep your animal with you at all times. You WILL be disappointed. Also, the laws of the United States that provide special allowances for therapy, service, assistance and emotional support animals do not apply outside of the United States.