

Importation of Pets into French Polynesia V1 3-20

SV Spirit of Argo

Version Update

V1 3-23-20 Spirit of Argo document created

Background

Our dog was already chipped and immunized against rabies before we left England. The UK also requires a serology test to prove the individual dog responds to the vaccine and produces anti-bodies. British dogs are required to carry a Pet Passport with complete documentation of immunizations signed by vet to travel. We had kept up and documented all annual vaccinations and health checks.

Before leaving for French Polynesia

1. Your dog needs to be microchipped for identification.
2. Free of rabies and preferably regularly immunized.
3. Free of Leishmania. Set up, in advance, to have the dog tested and get results back just before leaving.

Additional Information regarding Leishmania disease

Many dogs with Leishmania disease show no symptoms but can be carriers. There have been two cases, so far, where cruisers have accidentally brought in infected dogs. When they tested positive in Tahiti, one cruiser flew the dog home to family the other opted to have the elderly pet put to sleep. **Unfortunately we found out the FP Ministry of Agriculture would not accept any of the blood tests done in Panama.**

We left from Panama. There were few vets there that knew anything about testing for Leishmania, but finally found someone. (See Contacts) Only just learning about the disease we got the dog tested right away before the canal crossing. Then again, the week before leaving, for the 'officials' in French Polynesia.

There had never been a 'break' in the dogs annual rabies vaccination since his initial serology confirmation, so we did not get another serology test done for that.

Arriving in French Polynesia

1. Declare to customs you have a dog aboard.
2. Inform officials you plan to adhere to the 3 month quarantine to keep the dog aboard.
3. Contact the local Ministry of Agriculture to begin importation paperwork.
4. Contact a Ministry of Agriculture approved Vet and arrange to have blood extracted, preserved and sent to France for rabies and Leishmania disease testing.

Arrival Information

Marquesas

Both ports of entry, Hiva Oa and Nuka Hiva, have a Ministry of Agriculture offices. Get directions from the customs officer when you check in.

Nuka Hiva now has a Vet who can help you through process and take initial blood samples for mailing. See contact information.

Arriving in the South, **Gambier Islands** There are no facilities or vets until you get north to Society Islands.

We heard French Polynesia was very strict about insuring imported animals were disease free. We did not realize how strict!

We arrived after a straight (we wish) passage of 5 weeks from the Las Perlas Islands. We checked into the country on the island of Hiva Oa. Very friendly and helpful Gerdimere. We declared the dog and they suggested we see the Ministry of Agriculture, at the top of the hill, if we would like to bring him ashore.

We returned with all the dogs paperwork. The office in Hiva Oa had us read the 3 month quarantine restrictions and sign that. They informed us there were no vets to complete the importation process until we got to Tahiti, in the Society Islands. They took a copy of all our paperwork to forward ahead of us.

Completing the Process

You have to go to the main administration island of Tahiti to finish the importation. Contact the Ministry of Agriculture in Papeete and they will lead you through the process. They may request another blood test taken for Leishmania.

Tahiti: 5 months later, via the Tuamotu atolls, we arrived in Tahiti. Fully confident we had 'more than' completed our quarantine period. We were sure we just had only to get a vet to sign us off. How wrong we were.

Christmas holidays were approaching, so we did try to rush to get things started, and unfortunately can not give you any 'true' time lines.

First we needed to find the Ministry of Agriculture. (see Contact Info for GPS coordinates) Also known as DAG. Thankfully Papeete, Tahiti's capital, has the BEST tourist information center right on the sea front. They looked up the number, called them and translated for us. The office wanted us to come in and see them in person. The tourist office made us a map and offered to call us a cab. We wanted to explore the city so decided, stupidly, to walk. Thankfully a local took pity on us, fed us cold water and bananas, and drove us.

Unfortunately our French was as bad as the officer on duties English. But somehow we got all the paperwork completed, contact details exchanged and it was now up to us to

contact one of their list of certified Vets to begin the process. No idea what happened to the paperwork we completed in Hiva Oa? (Suggest making copies of all submitted paperwork submitted in the Marquesas)

Finding a Vet when your French is rubbish is not easy. Finally we found an approved practice with some staff who spoke English. (see contact info) Very friendly and very helpful.

Unfortunately we found out the FP Ministry of Agriculture would not accept any of the blood tests done in Panama. They required new tests done and sent to France.

Our new vet came down to the Marina and met us at the dingy dock to take the dogs blood. We went back with her to have it preserved and mailed it off ourselves at the post office. They emailed quickly back that all were clear, but the Ministry insisted we wait until the certificates were received through the post.

Here things got a bit grey.

First they told us the dog needed 3 months quarantine now. We pointed out, with travel time, the dog had already been quarantined almost 6 months, they relented.

Next they said we needed another Leishmania test in 30 days, to be sure first was correct. We explained we had the test done, with negative results, just before we left. So the most recent test was their assurance the first was correct. Then bang!

They asked us if we had a free afternoon and were happy to check the dog in. Picked up Ministry representative and our Vet at the dock. Brought them both aboard for coffee. Vet gave the dog a deworming tablet and we were told we made payment the next day at customs warehouse in Papeete's main docks the next day. \$30.

In Closing

We had no idea what we were doing.

The vet in Papeete was not sure what she was supposed to do.

I am not even completely sure the Ministry of Agriculture knew exactly what they were doing.

Not that many boats come through with pets.

But in the end we all managed to actually get through the process with little more than a delay for the paperwork to come back from France.

Hopefully we have 'paved the way' for other responsible pet owners that cruise, and our information makes it a little easier for you.

Contact Information

Ministry of Agriculture, Tahiti:

Ministere de L'Agriculture et de la Peche

Pirae, rue Tuterai Tane, route de l'Hippodrome

GPS :-17.535462, -149.540016

Tel: (689) 42 81 44

Email secretart direction: sdr@rural.gov.pf

Department de veterinaire: sdr.qaav@rural.gov.pf

<https://www.service-public.pf/voir/annuaire/dag-direction-agriculture/>

Veterinarians

Tahiti

Clinique Veterinaire de Fariipiti

Ave du Cjed Vairaatoa, Papeete

Tel: (689) 40 50 65 65

The receptionist does not speak English but many of the nurses and vets do.

We worked with the lovely Helene Boczkow.

Nuka Hiva

Ludovic Verfaillie

<https://www.facebook.com/VetoNukuHiva>

Panama

Vet, who will do call outs to Marinas, in Panama

Leida

+507 69 80 32 77

She only speaks Spanish, but some of the Marina Staff will help.

The Visitors Centre in Papeete will give you maps, make phone calls and translate for you. They are a wonderful resource for visitors and happy to help.

Laboratories we used in France for blood tests:

IDEXX Laboratories

84, rue Charles Micels, 93200 Saint-Denis

France

laboratoire@idexx.com

www.idexx.fr

Rabies serology test £128

Leishmania serology test £56

Happy Sailing from Quinn, our Irish Terrier aboard Spirit of Argo