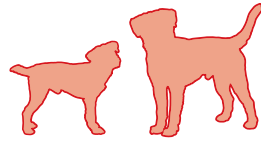


Points to consider when importing a rescue dog from abroad

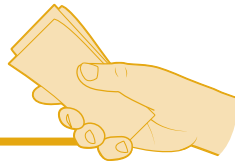
There is an increasing trend in Europe to rescue and import dogs from abroad. Many dogs around the world live in desperate conditions: on the streets, in unregulated breeding establishments and even being bred for food. This has led many charities and independent groups to rescue dogs and seek adoption in a more animal-friendly country. Although these dogs are often in desperate need of being rehomed, there are several things to take into consideration when adopting a rescue dog from abroad.

Poor Socialisation



Many dogs will have been living as strays or will have lived their whole lives in kennelled situations. As a result, they are likely to have been poorly socialised and may be very frightened around people. Initially, this can lead to nervous aggression, separation anxiety and other behavioural disorders such as running away when unleashed. Animal behaviourists can help new owners with the transition to a household environment but this whole process requires a lot of time and flexibility. Dogs with rescue backgrounds are unlikely to make suitable pets for busy households or those with young children.

Illegal Importation



Although there are many highly reputable charities and groups carrying out excellent rescue work, some dogs are sold or imported illegally. False documentation can lead to subsequent quarantine and the purchase of illegal dogs will encourage the practice. Pets should only be purchased from a reputable source.

There is a huge demand to rescue and rehome dogs within many northern European countries. Animal welfare and breed-specific charities work to rescue abused and homeless dogs and to rehome them locally. It is worth investigating whether a dog rescued from your own country could meet your needs.

Risk of Imported Disease



There is a risk of importing disease when rehoming a rescue dog from abroad. European legislation ensures preventative treatments are given against rabies, and also in some European countries against the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis*, both of which are serious threats to human health. However, there are many other parasites currently not present in the north of Europe which foreign dogs may harbour. If introduced, these parasites could cause long-term health problems in both humans and pets. It is therefore vital that imported dogs have a full health check with a veterinary surgeon. It is also worth considering that imported dogs may be infected without showing any clinical signs and go on to develop life-long and potentially life-threatening illness. Imported dogs should also be blood tested for exotic diseases before, or shortly after importation and again 6–12 months later. This testing is expensive and, if found to be positive, may require a lifetime of testing and treatment with no guarantee of recovery.

Risk of Exotic Ticks



Imported dogs may be carrying exotic ticks such as *Rhipicephalus sanguineus* which can go on to infest homes and sometimes carry pathogens. In addition to being treated for ticks, it is important that dogs are checked for ticks upon arrival. Even if all these precautions are taken, it cannot be guaranteed that all ticks will be destroyed therefore ongoing vigilance is key.

The time, expense and possible disease implications of adopting a dog from abroad should all be carefully considered before importation. There are routes, other than adoption, which can help the wider plight of foreign rescue dogs and improve conditions in the long term:

- Supporting foreign charities to help improve conditions for native dogs.
- Becoming actively involved with local charities to work alongside communities to improve attitudes towards dogs and their living conditions.
- Engaging with social media campaigns to raise awareness of the plight of dogs in many countries across the world.
- Rehoming dogs locally and supporting national charities will improve conditions for dogs while preventing the spread of parasitic disease to new countries.

For more information on the parasite risks associated with importing rescued pets please visit the [ESCCAP website](https://www.esccap.org)