

Relocating Your Pet to Japan

A practical guide for importing dogs and cats, including microchip identification, rabies preparation, the 180-day waiting period, advance notification and arrival quarantine.

Personally managed by Julia | Fly Your Tail



Japan requires exact sequencing and long-term preparation.

For pets arriving from most countries, preparation normally includes a microchip, two rabies vaccinations, an accepted rabies antibody test, at least 180 days of waiting and advance notification to Japan's Animal Quarantine Service.

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The essentials before you begin

All imported dogs and cats undergo inspection by Japan's Animal Quarantine Service. The required process depends on whether the pet comes from a designated region or another country or territory.

Preparation time	For most origins, allow at least 7 months because the pet must arrive after the 180-day rabies-antibody waiting period.
Advance notification	Submit the import notification to the Animal Quarantine Service at the intended port at least 40 days before arrival.
Quarantine on arrival	When every requirement is met, the quarantine period is normally completed within 12 hours and the inspection itself is often much faster.
Non-compliance	A pet that does not meet the requirements may be detained for the missing period, up to 180 days, returned or refused entry.
Travel method	Japan may be reached in cabin, as checked baggage or as air cargo when permitted by the airline and route.
Government certificate	The final health certificate must be issued or endorsed by the competent government authority in the export country.

Designated regions

- Japan currently treats Iceland, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Hawaii and Guam as designated regions for this process.
- The pet must satisfy the designated-region residence conditions, such as continuous residence since birth, at least 180 days before export, or residence since direct export from Japan.
- Pets coming from all other countries follow the non-designated-region process with rabies vaccination and antibody testing.

The country where the pet has lived matters.

Nationality of the owner and departure airport alone do not determine the process. Japan reviews the pet's residence history and certified veterinary preparation.

The standard rabies-preparation pathway

1**Microchip identification**

Implant or verify an ISO-compliant microchip before the qualifying rabies vaccinations. The same number must appear on every record.

2**First rabies vaccination**

Administer an accepted inactivated or recombinant rabies vaccine when the pet is at least 91 days old.

3**Second rabies vaccination**

Give the second vaccine at least 30 days after the first and within the first vaccine's validity period.

4**Rabies antibody test**

After the second vaccination, collect blood and send it to a laboratory designated by Japan. The result must be at least 0.5 IU/ml.

5**Wait at least 180 days**

The pet must arrive after 180 days have passed from the blood-sampling date. The sample date is counted as day zero.

6**Submit advance notification**

Notify the Animal Quarantine Service at the intended airport or seaport at least 40 days before arrival.

7**Pre-export clinical examination**

Within 10 days before boarding, a veterinarian examines the pet for signs of rabies and, for dogs, leptospirosis.

8**Government certification**

Obtain the official export-country certificate containing the microchip, vaccination, antibody-test and clinical-examination details.

9**Arrival inspection**

Present the pet and original documents to Animal Quarantine Service before customs clearance.

A different pathway for approved rabies-free origins

Pets exported directly from a designated region do not use the standard two-vaccination and RNATT pathway when all designated-region conditions are met. Residence history and official certification are central to this route.

1**Microchip identification**

Verify a readable microchip and use the same number throughout the process.

2**Residence qualification**

The pet must have lived continuously in a designated region since birth, for at least 180 days immediately before export, or since direct import from Japan.

3**Advance notification**

Notify the Animal Quarantine Service at least 40 days before the planned arrival and receive approval of the import inspection.

4**Pre-export examination**

Within 10 days before boarding, a veterinarian checks for clinical signs of rabies and, for dogs, leptospirosis.

5**Official certificate**

The government certificate must confirm the pet's identity, residence qualification, rabies-free status of the region and clinical-examination result.

6**Transport and arrival inspection**

The pet travels through the approved route and undergoes Animal Quarantine Service inspection on arrival.

Short residence can create detention.

When a pet has lived in a designated region for less than 180 days and does not qualify under another residence condition, Japan may require detention for the number of missing days.

RABIES AND DOCUMENTATION

Critical technical requirements

Rabies preparation	Official documentation
• Microchip must precede the qualifying rabies vaccinations • Two accepted rabies vaccinations are required for non-designated origins • Second vaccination at least 30 days after the first • Blood sample after the second vaccination • Antibody result of at least 0.5 IU/ml from a Japanese-designated laboratory • Arrival after at least 180 days and within the relevant validity periods	• Advance notification and Approval of Import Inspection of Animals • Official health certificate issued or endorsed by the export-country government • Microchip implantation date and number • Rabies vaccine dates, products, manufacturers and validity • Blood-sampling date, result and designated laboratory • Pre-export clinical-examination date and result

Validity of the antibody test

- Japan treats the rabies antibody test as valid for 2 years from the blood-sampling date.
- Rabies vaccination must remain continuously valid until arrival.
- If a new antibody test is needed after expiry, the original 180-day waiting period does not necessarily restart when Japan's continuity conditions are maintained.
- Because laboratory designations can change, verify the laboratory against the current Japanese list before sending the sample.

Check the laboratory before sampling.

Japan has removed laboratories from its designated list in the past. A valid-looking result from a non-designated laboratory may not be accepted.

NOTIFICATION AND ARRIVAL

Advance notification, ports and inspection

Advance notification

- Submit at least 40 days before arrival through NACCS or by sending the official form to the Animal Quarantine Service office responsible for the intended port.
- A flight number may be entered as estimated or to be determined and updated later.
- Japan issues an Approval of Import Inspection of Animals after reviewing the notification and supporting documents.
- Moving the arrival date earlier, increasing the number of animals or replacing the animal is generally not accepted as a simple modification.
- If detention facilities are full, Japan may require a different arrival date or port.

Airports and seaports

- Dogs may enter only through designated airports and seaports.
- Common international airport entry points include Narita, Haneda, Chubu Centrair and Kansai; other authorised ports may be available depending on species and service.
- Cats and legally recognised assistance dogs may sometimes use other ports by prior arrangement with Animal Quarantine Service.
- The import inspection is completed at the first Japanese airport reached on an international flight, before customs and any domestic connection.

Arrival inspection

- Animal Quarantine Service checks the original government certificate, antibody report where required, microchip and the animal's condition.
- When compliant, an import quarantine certificate is issued and the process is normally completed within 12 hours.
- Hand-carried and checked-baggage animals can generally be inspected regardless of date and time; cargo-reception hours are fixed by the relevant office.
- Keep the import quarantine certificate. Japan states that it cannot be reissued and it may be needed for later export.

Allow time before a domestic connection.

The pet must complete animal quarantine and customs at the first international arrival airport. A tight domestic connection can be missed if documents require clarification or cargo release takes longer than expected.

Cabin, checked baggage or manifested cargo

Travel method	What it means	Planning considerations
In cabin	A small pet travels in an airline-approved carrier in the passenger cabin when the airline and route allow it.	Airline size, weight, breed and aircraft restrictions apply. Japan's quarantine requirements remain the same.
Checked baggage	The pet travels in the aircraft hold on the owner's passenger booking when the airline allows accompanied animals.	Not offered by every airline or route. Transit-country and seasonal restrictions must be checked.
Manifested cargo	The pet is booked under an air waybill through the airline's cargo system.	Cargo handling, customs clearance, reception hours and an agent or customs broker may be required.

Travel kennel and route

- The airline makes the final decision on acceptance, kennel suitability, aircraft and route.
- The kennel should meet the airline's requirements and applicable IATA Live Animals Regulations.
- Transit-country rules may apply even when the pet remains airside; entering the transit country can create additional certification requirements.
- For air cargo, coordinate the Animal Quarantine Service inspection hours, customs broker, warehouse release and final delivery.
- Sedation is generally discouraged for air travel and may lead to airline refusal.

RISK CONTROL

Common mistakes that delay imports to Japan

Vaccinating before the microchip: Japan requires the qualifying rabies vaccinations to be linked to the identified animal.

Taking the blood sample too early: For non-designated origins, the sample must follow the second qualifying rabies vaccination.

Arriving before day 180: The pet may be detained for the missing days even when the antibody result is satisfactory.

Allowing rabies vaccination to expire: Continuous validity must be maintained through arrival.

Using a non-designated laboratory: The result may not be accepted by Japanese authorities.

Submitting notification late: Japan generally requires at least 40 days and may reject a late or incomplete filing.

Incomplete government certification: Missing vaccine product, validity, microchip date or laboratory details can prevent clearance.

Planning an unauthorised dog entry port: Dogs are restricted to designated airports and seaports.

Booking a tight onward connection: Import inspection and cargo release must occur before domestic transfer.

Assuming cabin travel changes quarantine rules: Travel mode does not replace the veterinary import process.

Before booking, confirm these 10 points

- The correct designated- or non-designated-region process has been selected.
- The microchip is readable and recorded consistently.
- The qualifying rabies vaccinations are valid and correctly sequenced.
- The antibody test was completed at a currently designated laboratory.
- At least 180 days will have passed by arrival where required.
- The 40-day advance notification has been submitted and approved.
- The final veterinary examination is scheduled within 10 days before boarding.
- The government-endorsed certificate contains every required detail.
- The airline and Japanese entry port accept the pet and travel method.
- Arrival inspection, customs clearance and onward transport are coordinated.

How we support a Japan relocation

Fly Your Tail can coordinate the complete journey or selected stages of the process. Every case is personally managed by Julia, with one point of contact across veterinary preparation, documentation, airline planning and arrival.

- Designated-region and residence-history assessment
- Microchip and rabies-vaccination sequencing
- Rabies antibody sample logistics to a designated laboratory
- 180-day waiting-period calculation and document timeline
- Advance notification and AQS communication support
- Government health-certificate preparation and review
- Cabin, accompanied-baggage or cargo route assessment
- Travel-kennel sizing and airline compliance review
- Japan arrival inspection, customs and delivery coordination
- Travel-day monitoring through final release

Planning a move to Japan?

Send Fly Your Tail your pet's species, breed, age, weight, measurements, country and residence history, microchip date, rabies records, preferred airport and target travel date for an individual assessment.

Official references used for this guide

Japan Animal Quarantine Service - Import and export quarantine of dogs and cats

<https://www.maff.go.jp/aqs/english/animal/dog/index.html>

Import from non-designated regions

<https://www.maff.go.jp/aqs/english/animal/dog/import-other.html>

Import from designated regions

<https://www.maff.go.jp/aqs/english/animal/dog/import-free.html>

Questions and answers on bringing dogs and cats into Japan

<https://www.maff.go.jp/aqs/english/qanda/dogcata.html>

NACCS electronic notification information

<https://www.maff.go.jp/aqs/tetuzuki/system/49.html>

Animal Quarantine Service contact directory

<https://www.maff.go.jp/aqs/english/animal/dog/index.html>

Important disclaimer

This guide is general information prepared in August 2026. Japanese government requirements, laboratory designations, airline policies, port availability and forms can change. The current Animal Quarantine Service instructions, approval notice and government-endorsed health certificate requirements take precedence. Fly Your Tail verifies the applicable requirements for each individual case before travel.