

Relocating Your Pet to New Zealand

A practical guide for importing dogs and cats, including eligibility, veterinary preparation, permits, air travel and quarantine.

Personally managed by Julia | Fly Your Tail



New Zealand applies strict biosecurity controls.

The 2026 Import Health Standard came into force on 1 July 2026. A transition period allows the previous 2021 process to remain available until 1 April 2027, but the selected process must be followed consistently from preparation through certification.

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The essentials before you begin

New Zealand permits dogs and cats only from categorised countries and territories. The required preparation depends on the export-country category, the animal's identity and residency history, rabies status, species, breed and current MPI conditions.

Planning time	Begin several months in advance. Rabies preparation, permits, quarantine availability and official identification timelines can control the departure date.
Eligible origins	Cats and dogs may be imported only from countries or territories listed by MPI in an approved category.
Arrival airports	Pets arriving by air may enter only through Auckland or Christchurch.
Travel method	International airline and cargo procedures apply. The airline makes the final acceptance decision.
Import permit	An MPI import permit is required for cats and dogs arriving from Category 2 or Category 3 countries.
Quarantine	All cats and dogs except eligible arrivals from Australia and qualifying assistance dogs require at least 10 days in an MPI-approved quarantine facility.

Animals and breeds that may not be eligible

- Prohibited dog breeds and types include Brazilian Fila, Dogo Argentino, Japanese Tosa, Perro de Presa Canario and American Pit Bull Terrier.
- Dog hybrids, including wolf-dog hybrids, are not eligible under the ordinary pet-import pathway.
- Eligibility restrictions may also apply according to the animal's age, pregnancy status and residency history.
- Most pet species other than dogs and cats cannot be imported. Limited exceptions include rabbits and guinea pigs from Australia and chinchillas from Great Britain.

Confirm eligibility before veterinary work begins.

A pet that is from a non-categorised country, is a prohibited breed or does not meet residency rules cannot be made eligible simply by obtaining a flight booking.

The export-country category shapes the process

MPI classifies eligible origins by disease status and official veterinary controls. The current Import Health Standard, specified approvals and model veterinary certificate for the country of export must be used together.

Category	General profile	Typical implications
Category 1	Australia	No standard post-arrival quarantine when all conditions are met. Advance notification and MPI inspection at the border are required.
Category 2	Approved rabies-free countries and territories	Import permit, official veterinary preparation and normally at least 10 days in an approved quarantine facility.
Category 3	Approved countries where rabies is absent or well controlled under specified conditions	Import permit, rabies vaccination and testing, official veterinary preparation and normally at least 10 days in approved quarantine.
Non-categorised	Origins not listed by MPI	Direct import is not permitted. The pet may need to move to an approved country and satisfy the required residency period before preparation.

Important transition dates under the 2026 standard

1 July 2026

The revised 2026 Import Health Standard and related model certificates came into force.

Until 1 April 2027

Importers may use either the 2021 process or the 2026 process, but should not mix requirements from the two systems.

From 1 October 2026

Pets intended for import from 1 April 2027 must begin meeting the new pre-export official identification-check requirement.

From 1 April 2027

All cats and dogs must comply with the 2026 Import Health Standard, including an official identification check at least 6 months before export.

Step-by-step relocation pathway

1

Eligibility and category assessment

Confirm the country category, species, breed, age, pregnancy status, residency history and proposed arrival airport.

2

Microchip and official identification

Ensure the microchip is readable and correctly recorded. Under the 2026 process, official identification checks must be completed according to the required timeline.

3

Rabies and veterinary preparation

Complete the vaccination, rabies antibody testing and disease-control measures that apply to the export-country category and animal.

4

Quarantine reservation

Except for eligible Australian arrivals and qualifying assistance dogs, reserve at least 10 days at an MPI-approved quarantine facility.

5

Import permit application

Apply online to MPI and include the required declarations, quarantine booking confirmation and supporting documentation.

6

Pre-export tests and treatments

Complete all species- and category-specific tests, parasite treatments, vaccinations and clinical examinations within the stated windows.

7

Official veterinary certification

An authorised or official veterinarian completes the veterinary certificate, with government endorsement where required.

8

Flight and arrival notification

Arrange an accepted route to Auckland or Christchurch and provide MPI with any required advance arrival notification.

9

Border clearance and quarantine

MPI checks the pet and documentation. The pet is either cleared at the border when eligible or transferred to the booked quarantine facility.

VETERINARY PREPARATION

What may be required

The requirements below are an overview only. The exact tests, treatments, timing windows and certificate wording must be taken from the current Import Health Standard and model veterinary certificate for the country of export.

Core requirements

- Readable microchip recorded on all documentation
- Required official identification checks under the selected IHS process
- Rabies vaccination and antibody testing for relevant Category 3 origins
- Import permit and quarantine booking where required
- Official veterinary certificate and supporting laboratory reports
- Final clinical examination before export

Additional requirements that may apply

- Internal and external parasite treatments
- Dog-specific heartworm prevention or testing
- Babesia, Brucella canis, Leptospira or other disease controls where specified
- Additional controls for intact, pregnant or recently mated animals
- Medication declarations and supporting veterinary instructions
- Alternative measures approved in writing by MPI

Rabies preparation for Category 3 pets

- A valid rabies vaccination and accepted rabies antibody test may be required according to the country and selected process.
- The laboratory, sampling sequence and certificate details must meet MPI conditions.
- Vaccination continuity and consistent microchip identification are essential.
- The official veterinary certificate must show the required results and treatment dates exactly.
- Do not assume that a titre test accepted for another destination automatically satisfies New Zealand requirements.

Use one process from start to finish.

During the transition period, a pet may be prepared under the 2021 or 2026 Import Health Standard. Mixing certificate wording, identification steps or timing rules from different processes can make the shipment non-compliant.

Arrival in New Zealand

Air travel

- Dogs and cats arriving by air may enter only at Auckland or Christchurch airports.
- The airline makes the final decision on live-animal acceptance, aircraft compatibility, route and kennel suitability.
- The travel kennel must meet the airline's requirements and applicable IATA Live Animals Regulations.
- Flight and quarantine dates must be coordinated before final booking.
- Sedation is generally not recommended for air travel and must be discussed with the veterinarian and airline.

MPI-approved quarantine

- All cats and dogs except eligible arrivals from Australia and qualifying assistance dogs require a minimum 10-day stay.
- The quarantine reservation confirmation is required for the import-permit application.
- An MPI veterinarian inspects the pet after arrival at the facility.
- The stay can be extended if the import requirements are incomplete, the pet is unwell, parasites are found or examination cannot be completed.
- Quarantine operators set their own accommodation and service charges; obtain a written quotation directly from the chosen facility.
- After MPI release, the owner or authorised agent arranges collection or domestic onward transport.

MPI fees to budget for

As published by MPI in July 2026, the standard fee for an import permit for cats and dogs from Category 2 or Category 3 countries is NZD 268.24 including GST, based on up to 1.5 hours of processing. Additional processing time is charged at the published hourly rate.

This does not include quarantine-facility charges, veterinary preparation, laboratory testing, travel kennel, airline freight, export certification, origin handling, border inspection time, local delivery or unexpected costs.

RISK CONTROL

Common mistakes that delay New Zealand imports

Using the wrong IHS process: During the transition period, requirements from the 2021 and 2026 systems should not be combined.

Starting the ID process too late: From April 2027, the official identification check must have been completed at least 6 months before export.

Preparing in a non-categorised country: Direct import is not permitted until the required approved-country residency conditions are met.

Microchip inconsistencies: The same readable microchip must appear on the permit, test reports, certificate and airline documents.

Booking transport before quarantine: The flight, approved facility and arrival airport must work together.

Incorrect testing or treatment windows: A valid treatment performed outside the permitted period may still be rejected.

Incomplete permit application: Missing quarantine confirmation, declarations or laboratory evidence can delay approval.

Using an unsuitable kennel: The airline can refuse a pet at cargo acceptance even when the MPI paperwork is complete.

Before booking, confirm these 10 points

- The country of export is in an eligible MPI category.
- The species, breed, age and pregnancy status are eligible.
- The selected 2021 or 2026 process is clearly identified.
- The microchip and official ID-check requirements are satisfied.
- Rabies vaccination and laboratory testing are valid where applicable.
- The approved quarantine reservation is confirmed.
- The online import permit has been issued where required.
- All veterinary tests and treatments are scheduled within the correct windows.
- The airline route enters through Auckland or Christchurch and accepts the pet.
- The kennel has been reviewed before airline acceptance.

How we support a New Zealand relocation

Fly Your Tail can coordinate the complete relocation 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.

- Eligibility, country-category and IHS-process assessment
- Preparation timeline and veterinary instructions
- Microchip, identity-check and rabies-test coordination
- Quarantine-facility and import-permit planning
- Review of laboratory reports and veterinary certificates
- Travel-kennel sizing and suitability review
- Airline, cargo, route and origin-handling coordination
- Travel-day monitoring, quarantine release and onward-delivery planning

Planning a move to New Zealand?

Send Fly Your Tail your pet's species, breed, age, weight, measurements, current country, destination city, vaccination history and preferred travel date for an individual assessment.

Official references used for this guide

MPI - Bringing cats and dogs to New Zealand

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/bring-send-to-nz/pets-travelling-to-nz/bringing-cats-and-dogs-to-nz>

MPI - 2026 step-by-step guide

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/bring-send-to-nz/pets-travelling-to-nz/bringing-cats-and-dogs-to-nz/bringing-cats-and-dogs-to-nz-using-the-2026-import-health-standard/step-by-step-guide-to-bringing-cats-and-dogs-to-nz-2026>

MPI - Cats and Dogs 2026 Import Health Standard

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/71909/direct>

MPI - Requirement documents and transition dates

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/bring-send-to-nz/pets-travelling-to-nz/requirement-documents-for-bringing-pets-to-nz>

MPI - Approved quarantine facilities

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/resources-and-forms/registers-and-lists/registered-quarantine-facilities>

MPI - Fees and charges when bringing pets to New Zealand

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/bring-send-to-nz/pets-travelling-to-nz/fees-and-charges-when-bringing-pets-to-nz>

MPI - Forms, templates and online permit applications

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/bring-send-to-nz/pets-travelling-to-nz/forms-and-templates-for-bringing-pets-to-nz>

Important disclaimer

This guide is general information prepared in August 2026. New Zealand government requirements, country categories, certificates, fees, airline policies and quarantine availability can change. The current MPI Import Health Standard, import permit, model veterinary certificate and written instructions from MPI take precedence. Fly Your Tail verifies the applicable requirements for each individual case before travel.