Owners urged to visit vet pre-Brexit

By Laura Honey

VETS could see a surge in demand for rabies testing and vaccination in the coming months, BVA president Simon Doherty has warned.

The alarm comes in response to an announcement from the government that any owner wishing to travel to the EU with their pet shortly after March 2019 (when the UK is set to leave the EU) should visit their vet immediately to discuss what steps they will need to take.

The guidance on pet travel to the EU, released by Defra last week, outlined steps that pet owners should take to be prepared for ‘the unlikely event of a no-deal Brexit’.

One of the key steps owners should take is to ensure that their dog, cat or ferret has been effectively vaccinated against rabies. This will require them to have their pet vaccinated and a blood sample taken and tested at least 30 days afterwards to prove the vaccination was successful. They will then be required to wait three months from this successful blood test before travelling.

To accommodate the four-month waiting period, pet owners wanting to travel at the end of March 2019 are urged to contact and discuss the rabies vaccination, and other requirements, with their vet no later than the end of November.

This could put extra pressure on the profession at a time when the workforce is experiencing shortages.

Doherty said: ‘Pet travel changes under a no-deal Brexit could spark a surge in demand for small animal vets and laboratory capacity to fulfil increased requirements for rabies testing and vaccination at a time when the workforce is already experiencing shortfalls’.

Other requirements that vets should inform owners about include taking their pet to an official veterinarian 10 days before travelling to get a health certificate, which will confirm their pet had a successful rabies antibody blood test result, and ensuring that they have had their pet microchipped.

More details on the new guidance from Defra can be found at https://bit.ly/2zAZXmh