

Pets

Some of you may wish to bring your pets with you to Germany, keeping a pet is a very popular hobby here too. It is a good idea to check that your landlord allows pets in the house or flat you are going to rent, as many do not, so it is often hard to find accommodation where pets are allowed.

With a dog or cat it is important to get them chipped before you arrive and make sure that their rabies and other injections are up to date as the pet passport scheme now extends all across the continent and so you may be asked for the documents on any journey with your pets.

Keeping a pet in this country is a very expensive hobby so you are well advised to take out pet insurance to cover you for vets' bills and also cover any damage or accident your pet causes. In Germany you are responsible for your pets, yes-even cats, and so liability insurance is also recommended in case of accident. When you are walking your dog you should keep him or her on the lead, as there may be cyclists who have priority on certain specially coloured parts of the pavement so it is easy for a free running dog to cause an accident. Many open areas also insist that the dog stays on the lead and especially in areas like nature reserves a free running dog is not appreciated. Large breeds of dog should always be walked on the lead and they are often required to wear a muzzle too, even small dogs which are sometimes allowed to be free, only have this freedom if they can be trusted not to chase cats or other animals. You should always be prepared to clean up after your pet also. There are national and local regulations concerning muzzles and you should check at your local Town Hall for detailed information.

The Town Hall is also where you have to register your dog and pay your dog tax or 'Hundsteuer' this varies from authority to authority and if you have two dogs can be more than twice the amount for one. When you register the dog you will be given a disc that the dog must wear on its collar at all times, the dog should also have a rabies tag on the collar which states when the next rabies job is due.

If you come from the UK and wish to return or travel there with your pet then you must follow the Pet Passport regulations to the letter. These regulations are much more stringent for the UK than for other EU countries and are amended on a regular basis and so you must check the <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/index.htm> website well before you travel and up to the day to keep up to speed with changes in regulations.

Generally there are only certain animals, which are covered under the scheme and you can only travel in and out of some airports and ports e.g. Heathrow, Hull and the Tunnel port. If you use the Channel Tunnel the pet can stay with you in the car, some airlines also allow small dogs and cats to travel as hand luggage in the passenger cabins on the flight, but you are advised to check before you book.

Pet Passport U.K.

General advice that is valid at the moment, the animal must be chipped, up to date with rabies vaccinations and all other vaccinations have its own pet passport and a certificate that states that the rabies vaccination has worked in

this dog. Shortly before you are due to travel you must take the dog to the vet. For flea and tick treatment and this must be recorded in the Pet Passport also.

Feeding your pet

Pet food is freely available with most of the brands you are used to on the shelves of your local supermarket many towns also have large pet superstores where you can buy everything your pets may need and also live pets too. Many vets also sell special food for old or young pets or special diet foods, however nothing is cheap.

The Hamburg Fish market early Sunday mornings is a good place for unusual pets like chickens and rabbits to breed for food and many country areas have regular animal markets where animals and supplies can be purchased e.g. at Kaunitz in NRW first Saturday in the month.

German restaurants and pubs are not as anti dog as those in the UK especially if the dog is small, well behaved and keeps off the furniture. They often bring a bowl of water for the dog without being asked.

Small children here are trained from an early age to ask if the dog bites before touching it, this is an excellent habit for all ages to follow.