

FAQ: Importing Dogs Into the Commonwealth for Transfer of Ownership

Why were changes made to Pennsylvania’s Dog Law? For nearly 20 years, Pennsylvania has worked to improve the health, welfare and safety of dogs in Pennsylvania. Changes made to our Dog Law are designed to protect both animal health and human safety allowing the Department of Agriculture to handle complaints of dangerous dogs to protect our neighbors and improving the overall resource capacity of the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement (“BDLE”).

Who had input on these changes to the Dog Law? Members of the Pennsylvania Dog Law Advisory Board, trade organizations that represent kennels, rescue organizations, animal breeders, staff from the Department of Agriculture and members of the General Assembly met multiple times over several years and reached broad consensus on needed changes to the Dog Law.

What is the 14-day quarantine requirement? This is an important new requirement that was added to protect animal, public health, and provide pet owners with safety and peace of mind. Under the new Dog Law, dogs that are brought into Pennsylvania for sale or adoption must either be quarantined from other animals for two weeks, or meet all pre-transport testing and vaccination requirements before they can make their way to their forever home. This ensures that infectious diseases that may be brought into the Commonwealth with imported dogs, many of which can remain undetected for several days or longer, do not present after the dog has entered the home of an adopter or buyer.

Is there an alternative to the 14-day quarantine requirement? Yes, in lieu of a 14-day quarantine period, there are testing and vaccination requirements that can be completed prior to transport of the dog. The testing and vaccination records are required to accompany the dog and be kept in the kennel’s records for review.

What are the pre-transport requirements to avoid having to do a 14-day quarantine? The dog must have a current and valid Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (“CVI”). No earlier than 14 days before transport the following must be completed: if over 6 months of age, the dog must be serology tested and have a negative result for heartworm; the dog is tested and has a negative fecal result for intestinal parasites; the dog is dewormed with a medication approved by the US FDA to be effective against roundworms, hookworms, whipworms and tapeworms; the dog is examined and certified to be free of ectoparasites. No more than 12 months nor less than 14 days prior to transport, the dog is administered all of the following vaccinations: the Bordetella vaccination (intranasal or subcutaneous); the distemper, adeno, parainfluenza and parvovirus (DAPP) vaccination.

Can I use both the quarantine option and the pre-transport requirements, or must it be one or the other? The two options for importing dogs provide similar safeguards for animal health and the public getting those dogs. These two options can be used interchangeably as needed so long as each dog that is imported into a PA kennel is either quarantined or meets the pre-transport requirements.

Who is impacted by these changes? Any licensed kennel that brings in a dog from outside of Pennsylvania for the purpose of transferring ownership of that dog is required to quarantine that dog for 14 days or meet the pre-transport requirements for testing and vaccinations. This includes retail pet stores, rescue kennels, shelters and dog breeders. In these cases, all kennels that import dogs from other states or countries must follow a 14-day quarantine or the pre-transport requirements prior to or upon entry into PA. However, the 14-day quarantine or the pre-transport requirement **does not** apply to dogs being temporarily

housed in boarding kennels that are not being offered for sale or adoption to another owner and will return to their state of origin after boarding.

What is the difference between the 14-day quarantine/pre-transport requirements and a plan of veterinary care? All kennels that import dogs from other states or countries are required to either quarantine those dogs for a minimum of 14 days or complete pre-transport testing and vaccinations. In addition to the 14-day quarantine or pre-transport requirements for newly imported dogs, state-licensed kennels that are importing dogs are required to create and implement a plan of veterinary care in consultation with their veterinarian to minimize the possibility of transmission of disease. The plan, which must be approved and signed by a veterinarian, is intended to help kennels understand the best protocols for handling all of their dogs should a disease outbreak occur. Given that many kennels have unique circumstances, the law is written to provide flexibility and customization in the development of plans. BDLE does not have to approve the plan before the kennel implements it, although that plan must be made available for BDLE staff to review during routine inspections.

What is a plan of veterinary care and what is required? Plans are designed to be flexible and should be developed by each kennel in close consultation with that kennel's veterinarian. Plans must include the protocols for diagnosis, testing, treatment, prevention and disinfection for contagious, communicable and zoonotic diseases. Additionally, this ensures that kennels have a strong relationship with their veterinarian and a written document to reference should a disease outbreak occur.

Is personal protective equipment required to be used by shelter staff members and/or volunteers as part of the plan of veterinary care? Any required PPE would be described in the plan after veterinary consultation and should typically include basic biosecurity measures. Most of the plans BDLE has reviewed in the past require PPE only after symptoms of infectious, contagious, communicable disease develop and/or if concerns of disease are high.

Can newly transported dogs be housed in the same kennel areas as non-imported dogs as part of the kennel population, or do they need a separate housing area? BDLE encourages kennels to work with their veterinarian to incorporate appropriate measures into the kennel's plan of veterinary care as far as how dogs are to be housed within the kennel. Many plans BDLE has reviewed allow for housing of imported dogs in the kennel areas of the general population, but these plans provide specific space and/or the use of other materials that would constitute some physical barrier between the populations.

Are there restrictions surrounding walking dogs completing the 14-day quarantine outside or allowing for enrichment of these dogs on the kennel property? All details relating to housing, walking, and enrichment are best determined through consultation with a veterinarian and should be included in the kennel's plan of veterinary care. The plan for different categories of dogs can vary widely—for example, a plan for a dog to be moved to a foster home will naturally differ from that of a dog moving to a shelter facility.

Is there a template for the plan of veterinary care including the level of specificity that is expected in the “protocols for diagnosis, testing, treatment, prevention and disinfection for contagious, infectious, communicable and zoonotic diseases” that organizations must create for transporting dogs into the state? See attached plan example for a rescue that uses fosters and does enrichment. While the template provides a good general reference, all kennels importing dogs should consult with their veterinarian to develop a plan specific to their operations.

Does BDLE provide any recommendations or resources to organizations on how to behaviorally support transported dogs if they are completing the 14-day quarantine? Any enrichment or behavioral needs for the dogs/puppies should be addressed in the plan of veterinary care after consultation with the kennel's veterinarian. BDLE has reviewed plans that specifically describe, for example, how puppies will be provided necessary socialization and playtimes to support their behavioral health and welfare as with any other dog within the kennel.

Are there clearly defined procedures for shelters utilizing fostering, including caregiver interactions and what actions are permissible during the 14-day quarantine in foster care (walking, enrichment, interactions with resident pets and other animals in the community, interactions with people in the home and community, needing to transport the dog for veterinary care, etc.)? Specific plans on how these animals are housed in foster care settings need to be discussed with the kennel's veterinarian and should be incorporated into the plan for veterinary care. For example, dogs/puppies are certainly permitted to leave their area/foster for necessary veterinary care or for any further specific shelter or foster requirements the veterinarian determines and includes in the plan.

Can imported dogs be advertised if they are completing the 14-day quarantine? Yes. The Dog Law prohibits dogs under quarantine from being dispensed, moved, sold, given away or transferred to a new owner until the 14-day quarantine period has elapsed, but the Dog Law does not prohibit those dogs from being advertised to the public.

Can a dog in a foster home under quarantine be moved if medically/behaviorally necessary? Yes; however, kennels should consult with their veterinarian and relevant documentation should be kept to assist with disease traceability.

Can a dog imported into a kennel be moved to a foster home during the 14-day quarantine? Yes, foster homes can be used. This arrangement should be incorporated into the kennel's overall plan of veterinary care developed in consultation with their veterinarian.