



2026

THE US TO ITALY PET ARRIVAL GUIDE



Airports, Airlines,
and the First 48
Hours

Prepared by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS



3

The Short Version and Key Takeaways

8

Landing Day at Fiumicino and Malpensa

4-5

Before You Fly: The EU Health Certificate and USDA Endorsement

9

The First 48 Hours in Italy

6

How Airlines Flying the US to Italy Handle Pets

10

Onward to Sicily and Your Checklist

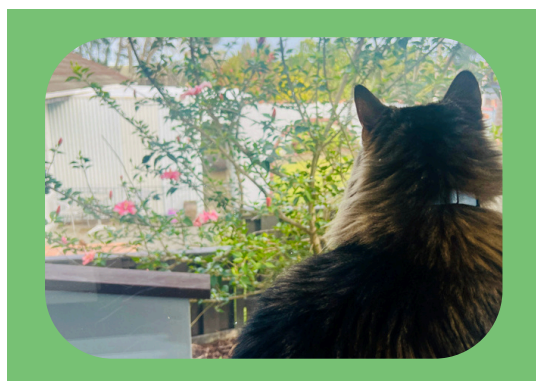
7

Choosing Your Arrival Airport

11-12

Sources and Contact

THE SHORT VERSION



Dogs and cats moving from the US to Italy can only travel on an EU non-commercial health certificate if the owner or designated person is on the same flight(s). Otherwise, a commercial health certificate, must be issued by a USDA-accredited veterinarian and endorsed by USDA APHIS 2 days prior to travel.

The airline you choose decides how your pet flies: in the cabin, or in the hold through a cargo program. The airport you land at decides where the official document and identity check happens. In Italy, only Rome Fiumicino and Milan Malpensa have full veterinary border offices for pets of any size, and their hours are limited, so your arrival day and time matter as much as your paperwork.

Once a compliant US pet clears, there is no quarantine. The first 48 hours are about water, rest, and a calm onward journey.

Key Takeaways

1. Microchip first, rabies vaccine second. A shot given before the chip is scanned does not count.
2. Watch two clocks: how long the certificate is valid for and when it needs to be completed and endorsed.
3. A new EU certificate format is required for travel on or after October 1, 2026 (EU 2026/131 and EU 2026/848).
4. Cargo and commercial arrivals must land at Fiumicino (FCO) or Malpensa (MXP).
5. FCO's border vet office closes Sundays. MXP's closes at 2:00 p.m. Saturday and all day Sunday.
6. After release, water comes first, then a relief area, then the car.



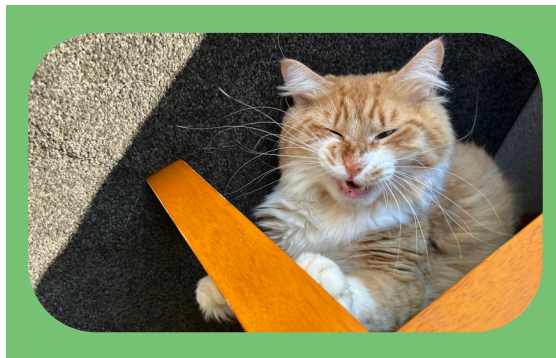
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BEFORE YOU FLY: GETTING THE EU HEALTH CERTIFICATE RIGHT

Which certificate do you need?

Non-commercial: the owner or designated person is on the same flight, and five or fewer pets move together.

Commercial: no owner or designated person travels, six or more pets move, or the pet changes owners on arrival.



For commercial certificates, USDA APHIS requires an accredited vet inspection within 48 hours of departing the US and USDA endorsement within 48 hours of issuance. Source: USDA APHIS, Pet Travel From the United States to Italy.

"The families who have the easiest arrivals in Italy plan the vet visit around the landing, not the other way around. Pick your arrival airport and day first, check that the border vet office will be open, then count back to the endorsement date."

Adam Melton, VP of Strategic Initiatives, Starwood Pet Travel

The Rabies Rules That Matter for US Pets

- ISO microchip scanned before the rabies shot
- At least 12 weeks old at vaccination
- Wait 21 days after a primary shot (30 for some vaccines)
- For US pets, a primary shot counts for 1 year for EU travel, even a 3-year vaccine
- No rabies titer test needed from the US

**OCT 1
2026**

New Certificate Format: October 1, 2026

Required under EU 2026/131 and EU 2026/848, per USDA APHIS. Non-commercial: effective October 1, 2026 (old format endorsable through September 30). Commercial: effective October 17, 2026 (old format through October 16). Traveling near either date? Confirm the version with your vet.



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YOUR CERTIFICATE TIMELINE, WORKING BACKWARD



Before You Leave

- 3 to 6 months out: a fresh 1-year rabies vaccine after the chip scan, so only one vaccine certificate is needed (APHIS suggestion)
- At least 21 days out: minimum wait after a primary rabies shot
- Non-Commercial Certificates: Completed within 30 days of travel, then endorsed by the USDA within 10 days of arrival.
- Commercial Certificate: Completed 2 days prior to travel, then endorsed by the USDA.

Travel Day and After

- The printed, endorsed certificate and signed owner declaration must travel with your pet.
- Bring every rabies certificate since the primary shot.
- The certificate covers onward EU travel for up to 6 months while rabies coverage stays valid.
- Sources: USDA APHIS; European Commission

10

Days for USDA non-commercial endorsement before EU arrival

USDA must ink-sign and emboss the paper certificate



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HOW AIRLINES FLYING THE US TO ITALY HANDLE PETS

US carriers

Delta: cabin in Main and Comfort only, \$200 each way internationally, at least 15 weeks old for EU travel.

United: cabin only, \$150 each way. The PetSafe cargo program has ended.

American: the carry-on list does not include Europe. Larger pets go through American Airlines Cargo's PetEmbark service. Checked pets are for military and State Department travelers on orders only.



Heads up: Delta Cargo's pets page currently lists a temporary global embargo on household pet shipments, with a limited exception for military and Foreign Service families on PCS orders. Confirm cargo options before you book.



Weight is not the whole test: your pet must stand, turn, and lie down in a carrier that fits under the seat. Policies checked on each airline's site, September 2026.

Italian and European Carriers

ITA Airways: dogs and cats only. Cabin up to 8 kg on international flights (12 kg domestic), carrier max 55 x 40 x 23 cm. Hold pets need a rigid carrier with a metal door and metal vents.

Lufthansa (via Frankfurt or Munich): cabin up to 8 kg with the bag; heavier pets fly as excess baggage in the hold. Minimum 15 weeks old via Germany.

KLM (via Amsterdam): one pet up to 8 kg in Economy, bag max 46 x 28 x 24 cm. Hold up to 75 kg with kennel.



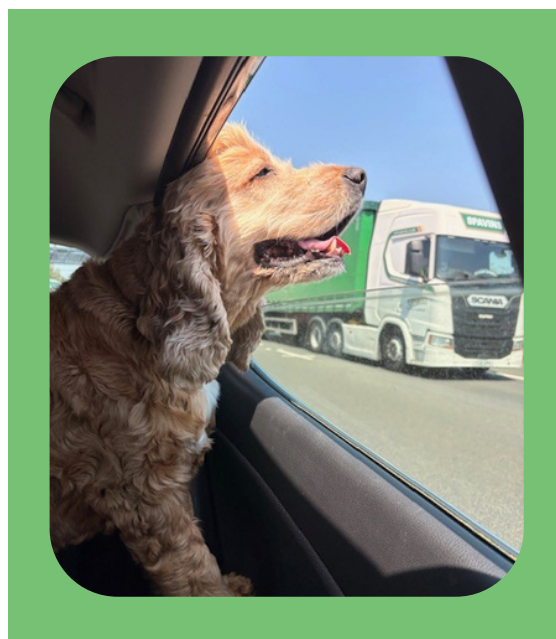
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CHOOSING YOUR ARRIVAL AIRPORT

Italy's border vet offices

Rome Fiumicino (FCO)
Mon to Sat, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Tel. 06 5994 4310 or 06 5994 4307
pif.fiumicino@sanita.it

Milan Malpensa (MXP)
Mon to Fri, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; Sat, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Tel. (+39) 06 59944794
pif.malpensa@sanita.it



Under EU rules, a pet entering from outside the EU must pass through a travellers' point of entry, and the owner must contact the officials there for document and identity checks. Cargo and commercial arrivals need a staffed veterinary Border Control Post, which in Italy means FCO or MXP.

Sundays, Venice, and Other Traps

Neither office lists Sunday hours, and MXP closes at 2:00 p.m. Saturday. Venice has no on-site vet office, so commercial and cargo pets bound for Venice clear in Milan or Rome first.

At FCO, USMAF is the human health clinic, not the office that clears your pet.

Sources: Aeroporti di Roma; Milan Malpensa Airport; Agenzia delle Dogane e dei Monopoli; European Commission.





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LANDING DAY

Typical Clearance Windows

Rome Fiumicino (FCO): about 4 hours, about 5 with a vet inspection.

Milan Malpensa (MXP): about 3 hours, about 4 with a vet inspection.

These windows reflect ReloCat Italy's day-to-day experience at both airports. They are not official government figures.



What Happens After Touchdown

The Usual Sequence for a Pet Traveling With Its Owner



1. Passport control: keep your pet's documents with your own.
2. Baggage claim: hold pets usually arrive in a designated area.
3. Customs: declare your animal.
4. Document and identity check: officials match the microchip to the certificate and review the rabies record.

Tip: land on a weekday, earlier in the day, so there is room inside office hours if anything needs a second look.

From the community: in r/ItalyExpat, an owner getting ready to collect a dog at Rome shared that their transport company warned "the process collecting him at Rome airport may be long and stressful." Plan for the time and keep documents organized.



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Hours 0 to 2: Release and Rehydrate

- Once a compliant US pet is released, there is no quarantine or government holding period.
- Offer water first, in small amounts, from a collapsible bowl in your carry-on.
- Skip a full meal. A little bland food is fine if your pet is interested.
- Use a relief area before the car.

******Make sure you don't offer your pet too much water or food too quickly. This is especially important for large breed dogs as they can suffer from bloat, which can be fatal.

Tip:
FCO has four pet areas, including one near belt 14 in Terminal 3 baggage claim.

If a Driver Collects Your Pet

"Once everything is done and the pet has been released from customs, the first thing we do is give water to the pet," says Stefano Saija, CEO of ReloCat Italy, Starwood's destination partner. The driver then loads your pet, lets you know your pet arrived safe and sound, and gives an estimated arrival time.

Tip:
Ask any pet transport service upfront how and when you will be updated.

Hours 2 to 48: Settle In

- A quiet room, familiar bedding, and water within reach.
- Hold off on visitors and neighborhood tours.
- Offer a normal meal once your pet settles, usually a few hours after arrival.
- Expect sleep to be off for a day or two.
- Find a local vet near your new home.

Keep your records together:
The EU certificate covers onward EU travel for up to 6 months.

Find a Vet Before Leaving If You See

- Repeated vomiting
- Labored or open-mouth breathing that does not ease outside the crate
- A pet that will not stand or bear weight
- Gums that look pale, blue, or grey

Some panting and grogginess is normal and usually fades within hours.



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ONWARD TO SICILY AND YOUR CHECKLIST

Continuing to Sicily

Domestic flight: ITA allows up to 12 kg in the cabin on domestic flights. Its Large Dog On Board service (launched July 29, 2026) takes dogs up to 30 kg, but only on select "Large Dog" flights. Confirm yours qualifies.

By road: there is no bridge to Sicily, so ground transport includes the Strait of Messina car ferry.

Rest in Rome first: FCO's on-site Dog Relais, run by Fly Le Dog, is staffed around the clock with vet help on request.



GOOD NEWS FOR SICILY-BOUND PETS

Clearing entry at your first EU point of entry is the import. The Rome to Catania or Palermo leg is domestic travel, so your existing certificate covers it with no second import check.



Your Arrival Checklist

- Before booking: confirm certificate type, how your pet flies, FCO or MXP for cargo, and office hours for your arrival day.
- At the vet: chip before rabies shot, 21-day wait, certificate within 2-30 days of travel, USDA endorsement within 2-10 days of EU arrival.
- Travel day: endorsed certificate, signed declaration, all rabies records, travel kennel, familiar blanket.
- After landing: report to the vet office, then water, relief area, and rest before any onward leg.

Sources

Official government sources

- USDA APHIS, Pet Travel From the United States to Italy: aphis.usda.gov/pet-travel/us-to-another-country-export/pet-travel-us-italy
- European Commission, Bringing a pet into the EU from a non-EU country: food.ec.europa.eu/animals/live-animal-movements/dogs-cats-and-ferrets/bringing-pet-eu-non-eu-country_en
- European Commission, Travellers' points of entry: food.ec.europa.eu/animals/live-animal-movements/dogs-cats-and-ferrets/travellers-points-entry_en
- Agenzia delle Dogane e dei Monopoli, Carta doganale per chi viaggia: adm.gov.it/portale/carta-doganale-viaggiatore

Airport sources

- Aeroporti di Roma, Useful Numbers and Pet Areas: adr.it/pax-fco-numeri-e-indirizzi-utili and adr.it/web/aeroporti-di-roma-en/pet-area
- Aeroporti di Roma, Dog Relais: adr.it/dog-relais
- Milan Malpensa Airport, Transport of Animals: milanomalpensa-airport.com/en/assistance/transport-animals

Airline pet pages

- Delta: delta.com/us/en/pet-travel/overview and deltacargo.com/Cargo/catalog/products/pets
- United: united.com/en/us/fly/travel/traveling-with-pets.html
- American: aa.com/web/i18n/travel-info/special-assistance/pets.html
- ITA Airways: ita-airways.com (Pets in the cabin, Pets as cargo, Large Dog On Board)
- Lufthansa: lufthansa.com/us/en/travelling-with-animals
- KLM: klm.com/information/pets/reservation

Community

r/ItalyExpat, "Experience collection dog from Rome airport": reddit.com/r/ItalyExpat/comments/1dbmz3i

Read more on the Starwood blog

<https://www.starwoodpet.com/blog>

Let us plan both ends of the trip.

Starwood Pet Travel handles paperwork timing, airline booking, arrival airport, and door-to-door delivery with our partner team in Italy. Get a free quote at starwoodpet.com

Information current as of September 2026. Pet travel rules and airline policies change without notice. Always confirm requirements with USDA APHIS, your airline, and your arrival airport before travel.



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are saying!**

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