



Cabin Paws

DIY GUIDE

Flying Your Pet to Abu Dhabi

A complete, step-by-step guide to flying your cat or small dog in-cabin from Heathrow to Abu Dhabi on Etihad Airways — microchip to touchdown.

Last updated: 5 October 2026

Route covered: London Heathrow & rarr_text; Abu Dhabi, via Etihad Airways (the only in-cabin pet route from the UK)

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Your pre-flight timeline

This covers the full process for flying a cat or small dog in-cabin from Heathrow to Abu Dhabi on Etihad Airways — the only airline currently offering this route in-cabin. Work through it in order; most steps depend on the one before.

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Dog essentials

Core vaccinations: distemper, parvovirus, infectious canine hepatitis and leptospirosis, alongside rabies.

Breed check: the UAE bans import of Pit Bull types, Rottweiler, Doberman, Boxer, several Mastiff types, the Japanese Tosa, and their crosses — on any airline.

Cat essentials

Core vaccinations: feline panleukopenia, rhinotracheitis and calicivirus, alongside rabies.

Breed check: no cat breed is currently restricted. Flat-faced breeds (e.g. Persian) are worth a quick confirmation call to Etihad.

1

4+ MONTHS BEFORE

Microchip your pet

An ISO 11784/11785-compliant microchip has to be fitted before anything else on this list — it must go in before the rabies vaccination, and the number needs to match exactly across every document that follows.

2

21+ DAYS BEFORE

Core vaccinations and rabies

Alongside rabies, your pet needs its core vaccinations up to date (see Dog vs Cat above). The rabies vaccination must be given more than 21 days before travel, after the microchip is fitted, and your pet must have been at least 12 weeks old when vaccinated. Boosters need to stay current — within 12 months of travel.

Good news for UK owners: because the UK is on the UAE's low-risk rabies list, your pet does not need a rabies antibody (titer/FAVN) blood test, unlike pets from many other countries. Worth a quick double-check this hasn't changed before you book.

3

WITHIN 14 DAYS

Flea, tick and worm treatment

Your vet treats your pet for external parasites (commonly fipronil or permethrin) and worms (commonly a praziquantel-based product), and records it on the health certificate.

4

7+ DAYS BEFORE

Book your pet's seat with Etihad

Etihad is currently the only airline flying pets in-cabin from Heathrow, and only to Abu Dhabi. Submit their pet travel booking form at least 7 days ahead — cabin pet spaces are limited. Your pet and carrier together must weigh 8kg or less, with the carrier no larger than 40 × 40 × 22cm, soft-sided, well-ventilated and leak-proof. Minimum age to fly is 16 weeks; the travelling passenger must be 18 or older.

5

ONCE FLIGHT IS CONFIRMED

Apply for the UAE import permit

Apply through the UAE Ministry of Climate Change & Environment's e-services portal (eservices.moccae.gov.ae). You'll need your pet's vaccination record with microchip number, species, breed, colour and date of birth, plus your flight details. Confirm current fees and validity on the portal, as they're periodically revised.

6

~7 WORKING DAYS BEFORE

Book your UK Export Health Certificate

This is UK certificate 3926, applied for online through APHA's EHC Online service with an Official Veterinarian (OV) of your choice. Your OV examines your pet within 24 hours of travel and signs the certificate, valid for 10 days. APHA can turn this around in as little as 1 working day if needed.

7

1-2 DAYS BEFORE

Final checks

Your OV's clinical exam and certificate signing happens here. Check that every document — vaccination record, export health certificate, import permit — shows the exact same microchip number. Pack the carrier with an absorbent liner and something familiar-smelling from home.

8

TRAVEL DAY

Heathrow to Abu Dhabi

Arrive early and check in through Etihad's pet travel process — your pet's carrier travels with you under the seat in front, not in the hold. On arrival, your import permit and export health certificate clear your pet through customs; with everything in order, there's no quarantine.

CHECKLIST

What you'll need, at a glance

- ISO microchip implanted, number recorded
- Core vaccinations plus rabies (21+ days before travel)
- Flea, tick and worm treatment (within 14 days of travel)
- Etihad pet booking confirmed (7+ days before travel)
- Carrier meeting Etihad's spec (8kg combined max)
- UAE MOCCAE import permit
- UK Export Health Certificate 3926, signed within 24 hours of travel
- All documents double-checked for matching microchip numbers

Requirements, fees and timelines are set by Etihad Airways and UAE authorities and do change. This guide reflects official guidance as of the date below, but always confirm the live requirements directly with Etihad and MOCCAE before you book — getting paperwork wrong can mean your pet is refused travel.

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PREFER THE HANDS-OFF VERSION?

Let us manage every permit, form and appointment for you

If any part of this feels like a lot to coordinate alongside work, travel and everything else, our full-service packages pick up the whole process — permits, vet timeline, Etihad booking and all.

See our packages at cabin-paws-003e41.webflow.io/packages