

## **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 isolation requirement?** This is an important new step that was introduced in order to protect animal 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 be isolated from other animals for two weeks before they can make their way to their forever home. This ensures that any infectious diseases, many of which can remain undetected for days or weeks, do not spread. However, the isolation requirement can be satisfied in multiple ways, including through residing in a foster home or guardian home.

**Who is impacted by these changes?** Any licensed kennel which brings in a dog from outside of Pennsylvania for the purpose of transferring ownership of that dog is required to isolate that dog for 14 days. 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 isolation upon entry into PA. However, the 14-day isolation requirement **does not** apply to dogs who are being housed in boarding kennels, which means dogs who are temporarily housed, who are not being offered for sale or adoption to another owner, and who will return to their state of origin.

**How will these new standards benefit dogs?** Organizations provide a tremendous service when they take dogs from less-than-ideal circumstances and place them with owners who are better equipped to care for them. Sometimes, that involves bringing animals into Pennsylvania from other states. However, rescue and relocation carry risk for the dog's health. The American Veterinary Medical Association has best practices that recommends that dogs be vaccinated at least three to five days prior to transportation and receive a health check, including parasite treatment, a day before transportation to ensure health status. BDLE has found, through inspection of licensed kennels, that many dogs brought into Pennsylvania have an unknown medical history, as is common in rescued animals. A period of isolation, either in the form of a rescue kennel or in foster situations, provides the opportunity for the dog's health to be fully understood. By providing for isolation, along with careful monitoring, their health status will be better known for transfer of ownership, ensuring both human and canine remain happy and healthy.

**What is the difference between a 14-day isolation and an isolation plan?** Any kennels that import dogs from other states or countries are required to isolate those dogs for a minimum of 14 days. In addition to the 14-day isolation requirement for newly imported dogs, all state licensed kennels are required to create an isolation plan in consultation with their veterinarian. The isolation plan is intended to help kennels understand the best protocols for handling all of their dogs should an emergency, such as a disease outbreak, occur. This isolation plan is required, whether or not a kennel imports dogs from other states or countries. 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 isolation plan before it is implemented by the kennel, although that plan must be made available for BDLE staff to review during routine inspections. In reviewing isolation plans, BDLE will give deference to the veterinarians who work with and are familiar with individual kennels in their determination of acceptable isolation standards.

**What is an isolation plan and what is required?** Isolation 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 diseases. Additionally, this provides the opportunity for kennels to have a strong relationship with their veterinarian and a written document to reference should a disease outbreak occur.

**What personal protective equipment is required to be used by shelter staff members and/or volunteers as part of the isolation plan?** Any required PPE would be described in the isolation 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.

**Is separation from the public required for dogs under the isolation plan?** Yes, an isolation plan generally should not permit dogs to interact with other dogs or with members of the public. This includes newly imported dogs subject to the 14-day quarantine requirement. However, kennels should consult with their veterinarian regarding any unique circumstances that may arise.

**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 isolation plan 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 subject to the 14-day quarantine outside or allowing for enrichment of these dogs on the animal shelter 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 isolation plan. 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 one moving to a shelter facility.

**Is there a template for the isolation plan 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 isolation plan example for a rescue that uses fosters and does enrichment. While the template provides a good general reference, all kennels should consult with their veterinarian to develop their isolation plan.

**Does BDLE provide any recommendations or resources to organizations on how to behaviorally support transported dogs during their required 14-day isolation?** Any enrichment or behavioral needs for the dogs/puppies should be addressed in the isolation plan 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 isolation 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 worked out with the kennel's veterinarian and should be incorporated into the isolation plan. 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 during the 14-day isolation?** Yes. The Dog Law prohibits dogs under quarantine from physically interacting with the public or from being transferred to a new owner until the 14-day isolation 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 isolation 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 isolation?** Yes, foster homes can be used. This arrangement should be incorporated into the kennel's overall isolation plan developed in consultation with their veterinarian.