International Health Certificates—Do You Know the Current Guidelines and Regulations?

The PLIT frequently reviews malpractice claims that involve international health certificates. The responsibility is on the veterinarian to research and follow current international guidelines and regulations. Here are three claims where the veterinarian breached the standard of care by not being aware of international travel regulations.

Client Quarantines Pets Overseas
Dr. A was presented with two cats who were being moved overseas. The owner requested that Dr. A ensure that the animals were compliant with export requirements. The cats were current on vaccinations (including rabies) so Dr. A performed the required microchip placement. One month later, Dr. A did the rabies titers. Six month after this, Dr. A wrote the certificates of veterinary inspection.

The owner and pets moved overseas. Upon arrival, the certificates of inspection were denied because the micro-chipping needed to precede a rabies vaccination (even if the pet was current on rabies). Consequently, the owner was required to quarantine the pets for six months at an expense of $10,400. Dr. A had relied on the guidelines previously used for export requirements. Dr. A consented to settle the matter and Dr. A’s PLIT-sponsored insurance carrier has offered to pay the owner $10,400 for the quarantine expense.

International Health Certificate Rejected
Dr. X was presented a cat for an international health certificate. Dr. X inserted the microchip and then drew blood for the rabies titers. No vaccinations were given because the cat was current. When the owner moved overseas, the health certificate was rejected as a result of improper vaccination protocol. The cat was quarantined for six months, and the owner demanded compensation. Dr. X consented to settle the claim and Dr. X’s PLIT-sponsored carrier reimbursed the owner $4,867 for the six-month quarantine expense.

Dr. Y Found Liable for Not Researching Export Requirements
Dr. Y was presented four cats for examination, rabies testing, and microchip placement. The owner and cats were moving abroad. Dr. Y performed the procedures and then advised the client to investigate if anything else was needed for the cats to move overseas. Just before the move, the owner discovered that the cats did not meet the international vaccination requirements. To still move on time, the owner was required to quarantine the cats for six months upon arrival. The owner contended that it was Dr. Y’s responsibility to follow the correct protocol, while Dr. Y believed it was the owner’s responsibility to research the requirements. A claims investigation determined that Dr. Y did not meet the standard of care and that Dr. Y was the responsible party to research export requirements. Dr. Y’s insurance carrier reimbursed the owner $7,679 for the six-month quarantine expense.