



United Arab Emirates

CAPITAL

Abu Dhabi

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Arabic

CURRENCY

UAE dirham (AED), pegged to the US dollar at 3.67 AED per USD

Guide version: V2 draft**Disclaimer**

This Country Guide reflects information believed to be correct at the time of publication. Regulations, procedures and charges are subject to change. IAM does not accept liability for errors, omissions, inaccuracies or misinterpretations in this guide. The information provided should not be considered as having been provided or sanctioned by the customs authorities of the country or territory concerned.

Overview

Customs Clearance

Sea shipments typically clear in 4 to 5 working days; air shipments in 3 to 4 days.

Documents

For All Importers

- Copy of passport
- Copy of residence permit / residency visa on passport, OR employment visa with UAE entry stamp if residence visa is not yet issued
- Emirates ID copy, Emirates ID application form, or applicable visa form (if residence visa not yet issued)

- **Bill of lading (express release) / air waybill (AWB)**
- **Detailed packing list in English**
- **Letter of authorization / undertaking**

For Diplomats

- **Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs granting exemption from customs duties**
- **Copy of diplomatic card**

Household Goods — Specific Information

The importation of used household goods and personal effects into the UAE is exempt from customs duties, provided the consignee holds a valid UAE residence visa. Without a residence visa — or without the passport to which the visa is affixed — no customs clearance or shipping line release will be possible.

All documents must be in place before the shipment arrives at port. Late or incomplete documentation results in storage charges and potential examination fees.

Duties on New Items: Import duty is charged at 5% of the CIF (cost, insurance, freight) value for any new items in the shipment. VAT at 5% applies to the total shipment value.

Free Storage Period: Shipments not cleared within 5 days of arrival at port are not granted a free storage period and attract port charges from day one of arrival. Shipments arriving before the weekend (Friday and Saturday in the UAE) effectively lose two clearing days and are more likely to incur storage charges. Plan arrivals for Sunday through Wednesday.

Customs Inspection: Customs authorities may conduct intensive physical inspections of import shipments. Inspection charges are incurred by the consignee. If prohibited items are found, severe penalties apply, including fines, imprisonment, or both.

GCC Customs Union: The UAE is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Customs Union. Goods destined for UAE mainland are subject to the GCC Common Customs Law. Goods destined for Free Trade Zones (FTZs) — of which there are approximately 45 in the UAE — are exempt from customs duty. Household goods shipments are generally cleared through Jebel Ali Port (Dubai) or Abu Dhabi Port for mainland delivery.

Jebel Ali Congestion: Jebel Ali is one of the busiest ports in the world and experiences periodic congestion. Allow approximately 1 to 2 weeks from arrival date for vehicle and large household goods shipments.

ISPM 15: All wooden packing materials must comply with ISPM 15 phytosanitary treatment standards.

Prohibited / Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

The UAE applies strict customs enforcement with severe penalties including imprisonment for prohibited goods violations. The following items are prohibited from import:

- Weapons and firearms of all kinds (without Ministry of Interior permit) **[PERMIT REQUIRED]**
- Military uniforms and equipment
- Narcotics, controlled drugs, and all derivatives including poppy seeds, flowers, and leaves
- Banned pharmaceutical substances (verify any medication against UAE Ministry of Health lists before travel)
- Alcohol and spirits (restrictions apply; note: alcohol is legal for licensed outlets and non-Muslim residents, but unlicensed import is prohibited in certain contexts)
- Pornographic materials in any format
- Gambling devices and games
- Statues and figures of animals with religious undertones
- Carvings and statues of humans, particularly nude figures (in large quantities or with commercial intent)
- Controversial political or religious literature and materials contrary to Islamic principles
- Toxic and radioactive materials
- Goods of Israeli origin or manufactured by companies on the UAE's boycott list (note: the UAE normalized relations with Israel in 2020 under the Abraham Accords; the historical boycott list has been substantially modified — confirm current status with the destination agent)
- Food items containing pork (for personal use, limited quantities may be imported into certain contexts; strict prohibition applies in general retail/commercial import)
- Articles made from endangered animals, or made of ivory or rhinoceros horn **[CITES]**
- E-cigarettes and vaping devices (regulations have changed; confirm current status with the destination agent)
- Counterfeit goods of all kinds

Note on Israeli goods: The IAM baseline states items of Israeli origin are prohibited. The UAE and Israel signed the Abraham Accords in September 2020 and established full diplomatic and trade relations. The longstanding Arab League boycott of Israel is no longer enforced by the UAE. Agents should confirm the current status of any specific product with the destination agent.

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Tobacco (travelers aged 18 and over): 400 cigarettes, or 50 cigars, or 500 grams of loose tobacco. Only one category may be imported duty-free — not a combination.

Alcohol: Non-Muslim travelers aged 18 and over may bring a limited personal allowance of alcohol into the UAE for personal use. The allowable quantity varies by emirate and is subject to change; confirm current limits with the destination agent. Note: alcohol purchased in UAE duty-free shops at arrival is an additional allowance separate from personal luggage.

Medications: Personal medications may be imported. Prescription medications should be accompanied by a valid prescription or medical report. Controlled substances require prior approval from the Ministry of Health. Quantities should correspond to the expected duration of stay.

Hunting weapons: Prior authorization required. **[PERMIT REQUIRED]**

Radio transmitters and wireless communication equipment: Subject to approval from the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA). **[PERMIT REQUIRED]**

Food items: May be subject to inspection and halal certification requirements.

Vehicles

Vehicle Documents

- Copy of passport
- Copy of residence visa on passport
- Residence permit
- Original / express bill of lading
- Authorization letter
- Title / copy of certificate of origin / registration card from country of origin (must include detailed description: engine number, year of production, color, and other specifications)
- Copy of commercial invoice / purchase invoice

- **Proof of ownership**
- **Copy of diplomatic card (diplomats)**

Specific Information

Duties and Taxes: Import duty on vehicles is charged at 5% of CIF value. VAT at 5% applies to the total shipment value. There is no minimum ownership period that affects duty eligibility — length of prior ownership is not considered.

Customs Clearance Certificate: Customs issues a vehicle clearance certificate within 2 to 3 days. This document is required to register the vehicle with the traffic department.

Residence Visa Required: The owner of the vehicle must provide a copy of their UAE residence visa before any clearance or release can take place.

Vehicle Age: Vehicles older than 10 years may be imported with approval from the local agent. Confirm requirements with the destination agent before shipment.

Left-Hand Drive Only: Only left-hand drive vehicles are permitted for import into the UAE.

Tinted Glass: Vehicles with tinted glass are restricted from import.

Information Required for Customs Clearance:

- Make, model, and model number
- Color
- Year of manufacture
- Current market value
- Engine and chassis number
- Vehicle weight (if applicable)

Jebel Ali: Allow approximately 1 to 2 weeks from arrival date for clearance due to port congestion.

Pets

Requirements

- **Dogs: canine distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis (canicola and icterohaemorrhagiae), parvovirus, and parainfluenza (Bordetella required for boarding)**

3. Additional vaccinations (must be current):

- **Cats: feline viral rhinotracheitis (herpesvirus), calicivirus, panleukopenia (FVRCP)**

3. Additional vaccinations (must be current):

Specific Information

Significant Update vs. IAM Baseline: The IAM guide lists only five documents and states "Permission from the embassy is required for importation" as the only specific information. Current requirements are far more detailed. The UAE operates a high-risk/low-risk country classification system for rabies titer testing, has an extensive breed ban list, requires an MOCCAE import permit (not mentioned in the IAM baseline), and mandates that all pets travel as manifested cargo — not in the cabin or as checked baggage.

1. ISO 11784/11785-compliant 15-digit microchip — must be implanted **before** the rabies vaccination; a rabies vaccination administered before microchipping will not be accepted
1. Rabies vaccination administered at least 21 days but no more than 12 months before entry; pet must be at least 12 weeks old at vaccination
1. Rabies antibody titer test (RNATT/RSNT) — required for pets from **high-risk countries** (see below); blood sample must be collected at least 21 days after the most recent rabies vaccination and results must be at least 0.5 IU/ml; titer test must be conducted within 12 months of travel (or within 90 days if from certain countries — confirm with agent)
1. Internal and external parasite treatment within 14 days of departure, documented on the health certificate
1. International health certificate issued by a licensed veterinarian and endorsed by a government veterinarian in the country of origin within 10 days of entry
1. UAE Import Permit issued by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (MOCCAE) — valid for 30 days from issuance; can be applied for online at moccae.gov.ae; allow 3 days to 2 weeks for processing
1. Owner's passport
1. Owner's UAE residence visa

High-Risk vs. Low-Risk Countries: The UAE classifies countries based on rabies risk. Pets from countries recognized as rabies-controlled (including the UK, Germany, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Sweden, New Zealand, and others) are exempt from the rabies titer test. Pets from all other countries require a titer test. Confirm your country's classification with MOCCAE or the destination agent before travel.

Minimum Age: Pets must be at least 12 weeks old when traveling from low-risk countries, and at least 15 weeks old from high-risk countries.

Cargo Only: All pets must enter the UAE as manifested air cargo. Cabin travel and checked baggage are not permitted (with a limited exception for Etihad Airways in Abu Dhabi only). Approved entry airports are Dubai (DXB), Abu Dhabi (AUH), and Sharjah (SHJ).

Quantity Limit: Personal import is limited to a maximum of two pets (two dogs, two cats, or one of each) per individual per year. Residents re-entering with their resident pets are exempt from this limit provided the pets are microchipped and meet health requirements.

Municipal Registration: All dogs and cats must be registered with the local municipality within 30 days of arrival.

Returning Resident Pets: Pets that were vaccinated before leaving the UAE and whose vaccination remains valid on return are exempt from titer testing. They must be accompanied by a copy of the MOCCAIE-issued veterinary health certificate from when they exited the UAE.

Banned Dog Breeds: The following breeds and their crosses are prohibited from import into the UAE:

- Pit Bull-type breeds: American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, American Bully
- Mastiff-type breeds: Brazilian Mastiff (Fila Brasileiro), Argentinian Mastiff (Dogo Argentino), Tibetan Mastiff, Neapolitan Mastiff, French Mastiff (Dogue de Bordeaux), Boerboel, Bullmastiff, Cane Corso, Bully Kutta/Alangu Mastiff, Perro de Presa Canario
- Japanese Tosa
- Wolf hybrids

Public Behavior: All dogs must be leashed and muzzled in public places.

CITES: Import of wildlife species and products thereof requires CITES permits. **[CITES]**

Transit: Pets transiting the UAE at the same airport or port without changing airline do not require a transit permit, but must remain isolated from other animals. Pets transiting as a consignment (changing airline or exiting the transit zone) require a transit permit from MOCCAIE.

Exporting Pets from UAE: Prior to exporting a resident pet, owners must register the pet with the local municipality, obtain a microchip if not already done, and obtain an export permit. A veterinary health certificate from MOCCAIE is required.

Consignment Instructions

Contact the destination agent to ensure all requirements have been met prior to import, especially for differences between air and sea shipments.

Documents at Port: All documents — passport copy, residence visa, packing list, OBL/AWB, letter of undertaking — must be in place before the shipment arrives. No exceptions are made. Late documentation leads immediately to storage charges and potential customs examination.

Weekend Arrivals: The UAE weekend is Friday and Saturday. Shipments arriving on or just before the weekend lose those days from the clearance window and are at greater risk of incurring port storage charges. Aim for arrivals early in the working week (Sunday through Wednesday).

Free Storage: No free storage period applies if the shipment is not cleared within 5 days of arrival. Port charges begin from day one. Advise clients of this risk and ensure all documents are ready well in advance of the shipment's ETA.

Jebel Ali Port Congestion: Jebel Ali (Dubai) is one of the world's largest and busiest container ports. Congestion periods can significantly extend clearance times. Allow 1 to 2 weeks for vehicle clearance and confirm current port conditions with the destination agent before quoting delivery times.

New Items: Any new items in the shipment attract import duty at 5% of CIF value plus 5% VAT. Advise clients to include purchase invoices for all new goods and to consider whether any new items should be purchased locally instead.

Free Trade Zones: If the client's employer or residential address is within a UAE Free Trade Zone, customs procedures and duty exemptions differ from mainland UAE rules. Confirm the specific customs regime with the destination agent.

Cultural & Other Information

The United Arab Emirates is a federation of seven emirates — Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Quwain, Ras Al-Khaimah, and Fujairah — located on the Arabian Peninsula, bordering Saudi Arabia to the south and west, Oman to the east and southeast, and the Persian Gulf to the north. The capital is Abu Dhabi; Dubai is the largest city and principal business hub. The UAE has a population of approximately 10 million, of whom roughly 90% are expatriates. The official language is Arabic; English is widely used in business. The currency is the UAE dirham (AED), pegged to the US dollar at 3.67 AED per USD.

The UAE is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and operates one of the most open trade environments in the Middle East, with approximately 45 Free Trade Zones and a standard customs duty of 5% under the GCC Common Customs Law. VAT was introduced in January 2018 at 5%.

Time Zone: Gulf Standard Time (GST), UTC+4. The UAE does not observe daylight saving time.

Useful Links:

- [OpenFactBook — United Arab Emirates](#)
- [Wikipedia — United Arab Emirates](#)
- [Ministry of Climate Change and Environment \(MOCCAE\) — Pet Import Permit](#)
- [Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Ports Security \(ICP\)](#)
- [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation \(MOFAIC\)](#)
- [U.S. trade.gov — UAE Customs Regulations](#)
- [U.S. trade.gov — UAE Import Requirements and Documentation](#)
- [USDA APHIS — Pet Travel to UAE](#)

Quick Links & Resources

- [Find Movers](#)
<https://iamovers.mobilityex.com/index.html#/search?loc=United+Arab+Emirates&lat=24.47&lng=54.37&range=50&assocs=800&fvw=c&ctry=United+Arab+Emirates>
- [Foreign Embassies in UAE](#)
<https://www.embassypages.com/unitedarabemirates>
- [UAE's Embassies Abroad](#)
<https://www.mofaic.gov.ae/en>

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