

Importation of Horses from Mexico Using APHIS-Approved Quarantine Facilities at Land Border Ports

1. Purpose and Background

This guidance document clarifies standardized requirements for horses imported from Mexico into the United States through U.S.-Mexico land border ports. This document further clarifies conditions for entry into quarantine facilities approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS). APHIS and Quarantine Facility Managers (QFMs) will work together to implement the procedures defined in this guidance. A veterinary medical officer from VS Port Services serves as a point of contact to answer questions about implementing the procedure. Contact information for each port is available at the [Equine Import/Export](#) website.

This guidance document represents the Agency's position on this topic. It does not create or confer any rights for or on any person and does not bind the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the public. The information it contains may be made available to the public. While this document provides guidance for users outside VS, VS employees may not deviate from the directions provided herein without appropriate justification and supervisory concurrence.

2. Document Status

A. Review date: 07/24/2022.

B. This document replaces Veterinary Services Guidance 13405.1, which is cancelled.

3. Reason for Reissuance

This document updates the earlier (and expired) guidance document.

4. Authority and References

A. Authorities (*Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) and U.S. Code (U.S.C.)):

- [7 CFR 371.4](#)
- [9 CFR 93.306](#)
- [9 CFR 93.308](#)
- [9 CFR 93.313](#)
- [9 CFR 93.323](#)
- [9 CFR 93.324](#)

B. References:

- [VS Guidance 13407.1, Testing of Equidae During Import Quarantine \(1/26/18\).](#)
- [VS Guidance 7000.1, Tick Surveillance, Collection, and Submission of Suspected Exotic Ticks \(4/2/18\).](#)
- [VS Guidance 7003.1, Treatment of Animals for Ticks with Coumaphous \(Co-Ral®\) \(10/27/14\).](#)

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C. Definitions:

- **Horses:** Horses, donkeys, mules, asses, zebras, and other equidae.
- **Compliance agreement:** A written agreement outlining the duties and responsibilities of each party, executed by the QFM and APHIS.
- **Quarantine area:** An area that holds livestock (horses, cattle, small ruminants) presented for import at the port of entry.
- **Quarantine facility:** A facility made up of one or more quarantine areas.
- **Premises:** One or more quarantine facilities at the same physical address.

5. Audience

VS employees, other Federal and State agencies, and members of the public.

6. Guidance

A. General

- 1) VS must directly supervise any equine import quarantine facility approved under this guidance. VS personnel and QFMs will staff the facility to inspect horses and carry out quarantine activities.
- 2) The facility must meet all requirements based on the type of facility approval before the first use and after each quarantine per consignment.
- 3) VS must have a signed compliance agreement, wherein the QFM agrees to comply with the directions set forth in this guidance, on file for each VS-approved equine import quarantine facility.
- 4) VS must inspect approved facilities annually.
- 5) Only horses qualifying for a 3-day quarantine may be imported through a designated U.S.-Mexico land border port under this guidance. Horses required to be quarantined for longer periods as a condition for importation must be imported through other APHIS approved permanent quarantine facilities.
- 6) Each horse intended for U.S. import must be accompanied by a health certificate and supporting documentation.
- 7) Importers must submit a written service request to VS port personnel at the intended port of entry at least 72 business hours before the horses arrive. Port business hours are 8 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday.
- 8) Horses inspected at approved Mexican equine quarantine facilities do not need an import permit. Import permits are only required for horses inspected at approved U.S. equine quarantine facilities.

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- 9) Importers must obtain a VS import permit in advance for each shipment of horses inspected at approved U.S. equine quarantine facilities to ensure VS personnel availability and quarantine space. Importers can apply for import permits through the [APHIS website](#) or the VS port office. Contact information for each port is available through the website.
- 10) VS will test all horses in quarantine for equine infectious anemia (EIA), equine piroplasmiasis, dourine, and glanders in accordance with VS Guidance 13407.1.
- 11) Facilities approved under this guidance can quarantine horses intended for import under one of the following two criteria:
 - a. "All-in/all-out" quarantine facility. This category applies to quarantine facilities that do not meet the standards for a "multiple lots" facility (see section 6.A.11.b of this document). All horses entering the quarantine facility and presented for import are considered one lot. No other horses may be in the quarantine facility or commingle with that lot once the quarantine period starts. No horses may be released from quarantine until all horses in the lot satisfy release requirements or are refused entry. All facilities not approved as a multiple lots quarantine facility default to an all-in/all-out quarantine facility, if the facility meets general requirements.
 - b. "Multiple lots" quarantine facility. This category applies to quarantine facilities that meet the standards required to maintain separation of different lots of horses in the importation process. Individual lots enter the quarantine facility on one health certificate and remain isolated from other lots of horses at the facility. If the quarantine facility meets the additional biosecurity requirements set forth at section 6.C of this document and VS approves it to handle individual lots of horses, then each lot may either be released or refused entry as a lot. The facility operators must make transport records available to VS inspectors so the inspectors can differentiate between lots.

B. General Requirements for Approving Equine Quarantine Facilities

- 1) VS personnel must inspect and approve all equine import quarantine facilities.
- 2) Facilities must have written VS-approved standard operating procedures for the importation and testing of horses.
- 3) Only VS, QFMs, and personnel authorized by both parties may enter the facility or handle the horses.
- 4) Facilities must keep a log recording authorized personnel entering and exiting the facility. Facilities must make the log books available to VS on request.

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- 5) The facility owner or operator must have written, VS-approved contingency plans for managing sick horses identified during quarantine.
 - a. For U.S. facilities:
 1. The plans must include the names of licensed veterinary practitioners who may treat sick horses at the quarantine facility.
 2. The plans must identify VS-approved treatment facilities with adequate isolation capacity.
 3. The plans must stipulate acceptable procedures to humanely euthanize individual horses or an entire consignment due to a disease outbreak and dispose of carcasses.
 - b. For Mexican facilities:
 1. The plans must include the names of private veterinary practitioners who may treat sick horses at the quarantine facility. VS will refuse entry to horses removed from quarantine for additional treatment.
 2. The plans must include contact information and notification procedures for Mexico's reportable diseases and carcass disposal in the event of unexpected death.
- 6) The facility must be located within 5 miles of the nearest approved ports of entry for horses.
- 7) The facility must be located a minimum of 200 yards from any other containment structure for horses.
 - a. Resident or working horses present on the premises must have a form of permanent identification (such as a microchip or tattoo) and are subject to official biannual testing with negative results for EIA, equine piroplasmiasis, dourine, and glanders.
- 8) The facility must be surrounded by a lockable fence at least 8 feet high. Fencing must have a single point of entry and exit that remains locked or guarded at all times when VS or quarantine facility personnel are not present.
- 9) The fence must be posted with bilingual signs (English and Spanish) along each edge of the perimeter indicating that a quarantine is in progress and no unauthorized visitors are allowed.
- 10) There must be a minimum 30-foot vegetation-free zone outside the quarantine facility and perimeter fencing.

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- 11) The facility and/or importers must provide food and water to horses in any consignment for the duration of their quarantine. Emergency supplies of food and water must also be available.
- 12) The facility must provide adequate shelter (at least 10 percent coverage) from sun and inclement weather for quarantined horses.
- 13) All feed and bedding used for horses in the quarantine facility must be stored inside the facility and originate from cattle fever tick-free regions.
- 14) The facility must have a vermin-proof feed storage area and storage areas for required disinfectant and equipment.
- 15) The facility must have the necessary equipment to keep the facility clean and sanitary. The facility treatment records for insect, pest, and vermin control must be made available upon request.
- 16) The facility must be at least 30 feet from other livestock (cattle, small ruminants) or resident horses on the premises.
- 17) The facility must have separate and individual isolation areas/pens for horses with a rectal temperature exceeding 101.5°F or that are otherwise sick.
- 18) The facility must have an area with stocks to safely restrain quarantined horses to inspect them for ticks and spray them with an acaricide.
- 19) All personnel entering the facility must change into clothing and footwear supplied by the QFM or VS. Personal footwear must be disinfected on exiting the facility.
- 20) Protective clothing (Tyvek or coveralls, footwear, gloves) must be changed before and after handling sick horses, horses in isolation pens, and horses with non-negative test results.
- 21) There must be control of surface drainage onto and from the quarantine facility to prevent any disease agent from entering or escaping on surface liquids.
- 22) The facility must have vermin-proof storage for any quarantine waste.
 - a. After quarantine is complete and horses are released, the material may be disposed of as domestic horse waste.
 - b. Facilities on the U.S. side may dispose of waste as regulated garbage before quarantine is complete. Waste from horses refused entry due to non-negative test results for EIA, equine piroplasmiasis, dourine, or glanders must also be disposed of as regulated waste.

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- c. Facilities on the Mexican side may follow local regulations for disposing of waste before quarantine is complete.
- C. Additional Biosecurity Requirements for Approval of Multiple Lot Equine Quarantine Facilities
- 1) The facility must meet all general requirements listed in section 6.B.
 - 2) The facility must be completely enclosed and all quarantine area openings to the outside are double screened to prevent the introduction of insects and properly secured to prevent unauthorized removal of horses.
 - 3) All quarantine area walls, floors, and ceilings must be constructed of impervious material that can withstand continuous cleaning and disinfection.
 - 4) The facility must be constructed to prevent horses from having physical contact with animals outside the facility and other lots of horses within the facility.
 - 5) Loading docks must be cleaned and disinfected after each use in accordance with the terms of the compliance agreement. VS representatives may conduct spot audits of all loading dock cleaning and disinfection.
 - 6) There must be adequate ventilation in each quarantine area and in the quarantine facility to prevent the accumulation of noxious gases and odors.
 - 7) Protective clothing must be changed between different lots of horses.
 - 8) There must be no flow of drainage between separate lots within the facility.
 - 9) The facility must have permanent restrooms in both the quarantine and non-quarantine areas of the facility.
- D. Import Procedures
- 1) For horses inspected at U.S. facilities:
 - a. The exporter/broker submits a written service request to VS port personnel at the port of entry at least 72 business hours before the import consignment arrives. (See section 6.A.7 of this document.)
 - b. The exporter applies for an import permit. (See section 6.A.9 of this document.) The exporter is responsible for reviewing the import permit and notifying the VS Port Office if an amendment is required before the horses arrive at the port of entry.

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- c. The exporter provides VS port personnel with a copy of the health certificates and supporting documentation at least 48 business hours before inspection
 - d. Before export, the National Service of Animal and Plant Health, Food Safety and Agriculture Quality or Servicio Nacional de Sanidad Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria seals conveyances with horses imported under this guidance, and records the seal number on the health certificate.
 - e. On arrival, VS verifies the seals and documentation, and offloads and inspects the horses.
- 2) For horses inspected at Mexican facilities:
- a. The exporter/broker contacts the QFM to ensure space availability at the facility.
 - b. The exporter/broker submits a written service request to VS port personnel at least 72 business hours prior to shipment to request import inspection. (See section 6.A.7 of this document.)
 - c. The exporter provides VS port personnel with the health certificates and supporting documentation at least 48 business hours before inspection.
- 3) VS inspects and collects a blood sample from each horse for import testing. All samples will be submitted to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa. VS will follow the protocol for non-negative results described in VSG 13407.1.
- 4) Each horse will be scratched for ticks on arrival at the quarantine facility
- a. Horses found with ticks must either be:
 1. Refused entry as a lot and returned to Mexico. Port personnel will spray the trailer and quarantine areas with an acaricide before returning the horses to Mexico.
 2. Held for an additional 10 days in quarantine as a lot and all horses retested for equine piroplasmiasis. If the retest is non-negative for equine piroplasmiasis, the entire lot will be refused entry and must return to Mexico or be disposed of in accordance with VSG 13407.1.
 3. If the exporter wishes to keep horses in quarantine for the 10 days, VS will not allow any additional shipments to enter the facility. See section 6.A.11.a of this document.
 - b. After inspection and scratching, all horses will be sprayed with an acaricide.

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- 5) VS staff, or personnel they oversee, must check rectal temperatures for each horse daily while under quarantine. All temperatures must be recorded on the individual record cards.
- 6) Horses must have 3 normal temperature readings during the 24 hours prior to release at least 6 hours apart. Normal temperature is considered between 99.5 and 101.5°F. If a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) is administered during quarantine, a 24-hour washout period must occur before recording normal rectal temperatures for quarantine release.
- 7) Horses must remain in quarantine and be observed for clinical evidence of disease for a minimum of 42 hours.
- 8) Only horses with negative laboratory results that have been inspected and found free of ticks, and have shown no clinical evidence of a communicable disease, may be released from quarantine after 42 hours.

E. Cleaning and Disinfection

All areas used during quarantine must be cleaned and disinfected prior to beginning a new quarantine period.

- 1) For U.S. facilities:
 - a. The importer cleans, and VS approves the cleaning.
 - b. VS personnel disinfect using an approved disinfectant.
- 2) For Mexican facilities, facility personnel clean and disinfect subject to VS approval.

7. Inquiries

For inquiries, please contact the USDA/APHIS/VS Southern Border Port Office at (512)-383-2400 or email vs.sbp@usda.gov.

Addendum 1: Stall record card

Addendum 2: Equine quarantine facility checklist

Addendum 1: Stall Record Card

Horse ID#	Horse Name
Barn#	Broker/Agent
Date of Arrival	
Condition on Arrival	
Special Instructions	
Negative for Ectoparasites	Sprayed with Coumaphos (Co-Ral)

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 Marketing and Regulatory Programs
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Date	Temp	Water-					Grain			Hay			Manure		Comments	Initials
		0	1	2	3	4	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	none	normal		
	A.M.	0	1	2	3	4							none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea			
	P.M.	0	1	2	3	4							none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea			
	A.M.	0	1	2	3	4							none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea			
	P.M.	0	1	2	3	4							none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea			
	A.M.	0	1	2	3	4							none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea			
	P.M.	0	1	2	3	4							none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea			