

 **NEWS RELEASE**

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USDA AMENDS ITS VIRAL HEMORRHAGIC SEPTICEMIA FEDERAL ORDER

WASHINGTON, April 2, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has amended its Federal Order on viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) to require permits before allowing species of live non-salmonid fish from VHS-affected Canadian provinces to be imported into the United States for direct slaughter.

As APHIS gathers more information about the disease, a federal regulatory program is put in place that allows for testing and certification prior to the interstate movement of fish susceptible to VHS. The original Federal Order was issued in response to the rapid spread of VHS in the Great Lakes region and the potential impact of the disease on a growing number of fish species, which includes species of fish raised commercially in the United States.

VHS is a highly contagious disease of some fresh and saltwater fish that, while not harmful to people, causes internal hemorrhaging and death in a wide range of fish species. APHIS initially took action in response to detections of VHS for the first time in fresh-water fish in several of the Great Lakes and related tributaries. VHS is responsible for several large-scale die-offs of wild fish in the Great Lakes region.

APHIS issued the October 2006 Federal Order to prohibit the importation of 37 species of live fish from two Canadian provinces into the United States and the interstate movement of the same species from the eight states bordering the Great Lakes. The revision of the Federal Order will facilitate trade of live non-salmonid fish between the United States and Canada. All shipments will require an APHIS permit that will specify the conditions necessary to prevent the introduction of VHS.

The amended Federal Order will remain in effect until APHIS publishes an interim rule establishing federal regulations for VHS later in 2008. Both the modified and the original emergency order can be found on the APHIS Web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/aquaculture.

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