

## **Guidance for Pet Evacuations (to include cats, dogs and pet birds) to the United States due to Hurricane Irma and Maria**

**Effective date:** September 19, 2017

**Valid until:** Removal of this guidance document from APHIS website (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/pet-travel/guidance-on-evacuation-pets.pdf>)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is providing the following guidance to all individuals who are evacuating pets from areas impacted by Hurricane Irma and Maria. *This guidance is for hurricane affected areas only; all other animal imports must conform to current federal, state, and local regulations.*

All pet owners should contact the USDA APHIS Call Center at 1-844-820-2234, Monday through Friday - 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) prior to departing for the United States.

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### **IMPORT REQUIREMENTS**

#### **U.S. Territories (U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico) to Continental United States**

Movement from the U.S. Territories located in the Caribbean to the continental United States is considered interstate movement and will require coordination with the office of the State Veterinarian in the state of destination. Contact information for these offices is available through the APHIS Call Center at 1-844-820-2234, or online at: [www.usaha.org/upload/STATE\\_ANIMAL\\_HEALTH\\_OFFICIALS.pdf](http://www.usaha.org/upload/STATE_ANIMAL_HEALTH_OFFICIALS.pdf)

#### **Waivers Granted:**

##### **Dogs and cats from U.S. Virgin Islands (VI) traveling to Puerto Rico:**

The Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture (PRDA) has granted a waiver for 30 days, beginning September 12, 2017, for dogs and cats traveling from the U.S. VI. Pet owners should contact a licensed veterinarian in Puerto Rico. The veterinarian will inform the PRDA about the duration of stay, the temporary residence, and later provide a health certificate to continue travel.

##### **Dogs and cats from Puerto Rico traveling to Florida:**

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has granted a temporary waiver for dogs and cats traveling to Florida as a result of Hurricane Irma or Hurricane Maria.

- Privately owned dogs and cats traveling with their owners may enter without a health certificate or proof of current rabies vaccination.
- Rescue dogs and cats traveling to Florida via registered non-profit organizations may enter without a health certificate or proof of current rabies vaccination.
- Privately owned pet birds and small mammals (e.g. hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits) traveling with their owners may enter without a health certificate.
- Dogs and cats being transported for (future) sale without a health certificate and/or proof of rabies vaccination must be transferred to a veterinarian upon arrival in Florida. These

animals are expected to be isolated until an exam and/or rabies vaccination has been completed by a veterinarian. Once completed, the veterinarian must send proof of the exam/vaccination to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Division of Animal Industry) before the animal can leave isolation.

Dogs and cats from Puerto Rico traveling to a foreign country:

- Argentina: Dogs and Cats will be accepted with an owner declaration at the time of arrival, instead of the normally required health certificate documentation.

**Non-U.S. Territories to Continental United States**

Travelers arriving with their pets (dogs and cats) from any other affected areas in the non-U.S. Caribbean can enter the United States without pet import documentation (health certificate). Arriving animals will have to be presented to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at the first port of entry in the United States.

Hurricane affected islands (with the exception of the Dominican Republic and Haiti) are considered to be rabies-free by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Therefore, dogs from these islands do not need a valid rabies certificate and CDC does not have a health certificate requirement.

Dogs arriving from the Dominican Republic and Haiti, however, are required to arrive with [valid rabies vaccination certificate](#). In addition, for all dogs arriving from the Dominican Republic and Haiti, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services (VS) will require inspection for screwworm infestation, or require an official certificate of screwworm examination within 5 days of departure. User fees for these inspections will be waived for 30 days from the date of this guidance.

Cats must be healthy upon arrival, but do not require a rabies vaccination or health certificate. After importation, all dogs and cats are subject to state and local vaccination or health certificate requirements. Please remember to contact your state officials upon entry. Contact information for the state offices is available through the APHIS Call Center at 1-844-820-2234, or online at: [www.usaha.org/upload/STATE\\_ANIMAL\\_HEALTH\\_OFFICIALS.pdf](http://www.usaha.org/upload/STATE_ANIMAL_HEALTH_OFFICIALS.pdf)

**Transiting through the United States**

Travelers transiting the United States with pets should contact the USDA APHIS Call Center, at 1-844-820-2234, for instructions on how to obtain health certificate for your country of destination.

**Import of Pet Birds**

The APHIS Customer Service Call Center is a resource for customers seeking information about the importation of pet birds. Please be aware that USDA APHIS federal quarantine and U.S. Fish and Wildlife regulations may apply. Call Center program specialists will collect information on customers' specific needs and work with veterinary experts to provide appropriate guidance.

**Other Animals**

Any other animals (including livestock) regulated by USDA APHIS will be handled on a case by case basis. Information on these animals can be accessed via the USDA APHIS Call Center.

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**WHAT TO EXPECT UPON ARRIVAL**

Travelers can expect the following procedures at the port of entry.

**Individual Dogs**

Dogs arriving as personal pets must be accompanied by their owners and will undergo a visual inspection by CBP. Dogs should have a valid rabies certificate if importing from Haiti or the Dominican Republic. If this is in question, contact the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at 1-800-232-4636. VS will inspect any dogs from screwworm affected areas (Dominican Republic, Haiti) arriving without a current screwworm certificate.

**Groups of Multiple Dogs**

All rescue groups should contact USDA APHIS Animal Care (AC) at 1-816-737-4223 before leaving the Caribbean for any special instructions for groups of dogs in their care. Importers that arrive with multiple dogs must alert CBP prior to arrival at the port of entry. CBP will relay the numbers of dogs, country of export, and time of arrival to the USDA APHIS port veterinarian. VS will inspect any dogs from screwworm affected areas (Dominican Republic, Haiti) arriving without a current screwworm certificate.