

**USDA APHIS, VETERINARY SERVICES, STRATEGY & POLICY
PROTOCOL FOR THE IMPORTATION OF CATTLE OR BISON
FROM CANADA TO THE UNITED STATES**

November 2007, Updated December 2024

This protocol describes the conditions required to import cattle or bison from Canada according to regulations found in 9 CFR Part 93.

1. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: The requirements for immediate slaughter and other-than-immediate slaughter are similar, except for tuberculosis testing, identification, and moving from the port of entry to the slaughter establishment. The term “bovines” includes both cattle and bison (*Bos taurus*, *Bos indicus* and *Bison bison*). “Bison” refers to farmed bison.

1.1. A USDA **import permit** is not required if the bovines are offered for entry at a land border port for any states other than **Alaska or Hawaii**, and meet one of the following conditions:

1.1.1. The bovines were born in Canada on or after March 1, 1999 (determined by APHIS to be the date of the effective enforcement of a ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban in the region of export), and have been in no other region; or

1.1.2. The bovines were born in the United States or were legally imported into Canada from a region recognized by the USDA as a region not restricted due to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and under no movement restrictions within Canada or the United States for at least 60 days prior to importation.

1.1.3. In any other case, and to enter the state of **Alaska**, the importer must obtain an import permit from:

USDA APHIS Veterinary Services
Strategy & Policy
Unit 39, 4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231
Telephone: **(301) 851-3300**

Permit applications for live animals may be submitted via the [APHIS eFile](#) system OR The import permit application (VS 17-129) may be found online: [VS 17-129: Application for Import or in Transit Permit. \(fillable\)](#) (211.74 KB) (for live animals, semen, or embryos). See [General Instructions for Completing VS 17-29](#) (556.61 KB). The completed form may be emailed to: laipermits@usda.gov

1.2. An **official health certificate** is required. The official health certificate must be issued by a veterinarian designated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and must be endorsed by a veterinarian employed by the CFIA attesting to the certifications and tests required in this protocol.

1.3. The **official health certificate** must include:

- name and address of the importer;
- species, breed, and number of bovines to be imported;
- purpose of the importation;

**USDA APHIS, VETERINARY SERVICES, STRATEGY & POLICY
PROTOCOL FOR THE IMPORTATION OF CATTLE OR BISON
FROM CANADA TO THE UNITED STATES**

November 2007, Updated December 2024

- individual identification, which includes the official Canadian eartag number or other approved forms of individual identification, and any other identification present on the animal, including registration number and brands;
- description of the bovines, including age in months, sex, breed, and markings (if any);
- region/country of origin;
- address or other means of identifying the premises of origin and any other premises where the bovines resided immediately prior to export;
- name and address of the exporter;
- specific physical location of the APHIS-approved slaughtering establishment, including the applicable Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) establishment number for bovines for immediate slaughter;
- port of embarkation in Canada, the mode of transportation, route of travel (slaughter animals), and port of entry in the United States.

2. IDENTIFICATION

2.1 For cattle, except for immediate slaughter, the “CAN” brand or tattoo must be properly applied before animals arrive at the port of entry. Improperly applied brands, hair brands, or anything not resulting in a permanent mark is not acceptable. The mark must be no less than 2 inches high or more than 3 inches high, and must be applied to each animal’s right hip, high on the tail-head (over the junction of the sacral and first coccygeal vertebrae).

2.1.1. If a tattoo is used, it must clearly identify the exporting country with the CAN letters applied to the inside of the left ear.

2.1.2. Note: alternative methods of permanent identification may be used if prior approval is given by Strategy & Policy before the shipment reaches the port. Any alternative methods of identification approved by Strategy & Policy will be communicated promptly through the Regional Offices to the port veterinarians.

2.1.3. **Bison:** After April 1, 2015, the permanent legible the “CAN” brand is no longer required for bison (*Bison bison*).

2.1.1.1. If bison are not branded, two official ear tags, (one RFID tag and the other a visual-only tag with the same official animal number) are required.

2.1.1.2. Bison can continue to use the same identification requirements as for cattle.

2.2. All bovines, including those for immediate slaughter, must be individually identified with

**USDA APHIS, VETERINARY SERVICES, STRATEGY & POLICY
 PROTOCOL FOR THE IMPORTATION OF CATTLE OR BISON
 FROM CANADA TO THE UNITED STATES**

November 2007, Updated December 2024

an official RFID eartag of the country of origin traceable to the premises of origin of the animal (birthplace). The official eartag must be tamper-resistant and provide unique identification for the individual animal and either use the country code as a prefix or have a mark unique to official eartags of the country of origin. The official eartags must have one of the following numbering systems:

2.2.1. National Uniform Eartagging System; or

2.2.2. Animal identification number, composed of the 3-digit country code and a 12-digit number unique to the animal; or

2.2.3. Premises-based number system

No person may alter, deface, remove, or otherwise tamper with the official identification while the animal is in the United States or moving into or through the United States, except the identification may be removed at the time of slaughter.

2.3 As of June 18, 2018, APHIS VS, in conjunction with the CFIA, has simplified the management of returning U.S. - origin returning from Canada after period of more than 60 days (more than 90 days for exhibit cattle) as summarized in the following table:

SUMMARY TABLE OF REQUIREMENTS (IDENTIFICATION ONLY)						
Country of origin	CANADIAN ANIMAL RETURNING AFTER 60 DAYS IN USA			USA ANIMAL RETURNING AFTER 60 DAYS (90 FOR EXHIBITION) IN CANADA		
TATTOO	CAN	CAN	illegible	USA	USA	Illegible
RFID	124	Damaged or replaced with 840	124	840	Damaged or replaced with 124	840
RETURN TO COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted	<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of original certificate used to enter the USA may be required as part of case-by-case evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of original certificate used to enter the USA may be required as part of case-by-case evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted	<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of original certificate used to enter Canada may be required as part of a case-by-case evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of original certificate used to enter Canada may be required as part of a case-by-case evaluation

**USDA APHIS, VETERINARY SERVICES, STRATEGY & POLICY
PROTOCOL FOR THE IMPORTATION OF CATTLE OR BISON
FROM CANADA TO THE UNITED STATES**

November 2007, Updated December 2024

3. CERTIFICATION STATEMENTS: The following statements must be on the health certificate:

- 3.1. The bovines have been inspected and found to be free from any evidence of communicable disease, and, as far as can be determined, have not been exposed to any such disease during the preceding 60 days.
- 3.2. Canada is free of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, Rinderpest, Surra, and Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia.
- 3.3. The bovines were born in the United States or Canada or were legally imported into Canada from a region recognized by the USDA as a region not restricted due to BSE and have been under no movement restrictions within Canada or the United States for at least 60 days prior to importation into the United States.
- 3.4. The bovines are not in quarantine in Canada.
- 3.5. The bovines were born on or after March 1, 1999, which is the date determined by APHIS to be the effective enforcement of a ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban.
- 3.6. The bovines have been individually identified with an official Canadian eartag, applied prior to each animal's entry into the United States.
- 3.7. For bovines imported for other than immediate slaughter, the following certifications are required in addition to those above:
 - 3.7.1 The bovines are from a Brucellosis-free province or territory or from a brucellosis-free herd.
 - 3.7.2 The bovines have continuously resided in a Tuberculosis accredited free or modified accredited advanced province or U.S. State.
 - 3.7.3 The bovines have been permanently and humanely identified before arrival at the port of entry with either a tattoo or a distinct and legible CAN mark that has been properly applied with a freeze brand, hot iron, or other permanent method, and is easily visible on the live animal.
 - 3.7.4 Note: If a tattoo is used, it must identify the exporting country with letters (CAN) applied to the inside of the left ear.
 - 3.7.5 Alternative methods of permanent identification) may be used if prior approval is given by the USDA before the shipment reaches the port. Any alternative methods of identification approved by the USDA will be communicated promptly through the VS Regional Offices to the port veterinarians.

**USDA APHIS, VETERINARY SERVICES, STRATEGY & POLICY
PROTOCOL FOR THE IMPORTATION OF CATTLE OR BISON
FROM CANADA TO THE UNITED STATES**

November 2007, Updated December 2024

4. TUBERCULOSIS (TB) TESTING

- 4.1. No tests are required for bovines that are certified by CFIA as continuously residing in a TB-free province.
- 4.2. As of June 18, 2018, USDA will no longer require TB testing for cattle and bison from the Province of Manitoba.

5. FOR IMMEDIATE SLAUGHTER

- 5.1. Bovines for immediate slaughter must be inspected and moved directly from the port of entry to the APHIS approved slaughtering establishment in conveyances that are sealed with seals of the U.S. government at the port of entry. The route of travel from the port of entry to the approved slaughtering establishment must be listed on the health certificate.
- 5.2. The seals may be broken only at the APHIS approved slaughtering establishment by an authorized USDA representative.
- 5.3. The bovines must be accompanied from the port of entry to the APHIS approved slaughtering establishment by VS Form 17-30, VS Form 17-33, and the official Canadian health certificate.

6. PORT OF ENTRY INSPECTION (approved ports of entry listed on [Importing Live Cattle and Bison from Canada to the United States | Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#))

- 6.1. Bovines for U.S. entry must be presented to the port of entry by appointment and accompanied by a health certificate. The port veterinarian shall conduct a visual health examination of the bovines to verify identification and the accuracy of the health certificate. All bovines other than for immediate slaughter will be offloaded for inspection.
- 6.2. Effective March 19, 2018, USDA APHIS VS is specifically requiring confirmed pre-shipment approval for Canadian **breeder and feeder bison imports**. This change is implemented due to a lack of adequate inspection facilities to safely inspect such animals at the port. The following steps are required if inspection will be deferred to the destination facility:
 - 6.2.1. Importation of breeding and feeder bison requires pre-shipment approval from the USDA APHIS VS Northern Border Port Services (NBP) office.
 - 6.2.2. The importer must notify the NBP office at least 7 days in advance of the proposed shipment, providing the address of the destination premises and the scheduled date and time of arrival. The NBP office will arrange an inspection

**USDA APHIS, VETERINARY SERVICES, STRATEGY & POLICY
PROTOCOL FOR THE IMPORTATION OF CATTLE OR BISON
FROM CANADA TO THE UNITED STATES**

November 2007, Updated December 2024

or assessment of the destination facility, as appropriate, to approve the facility. The NBP office will verify that VS personnel are available to perform the inspection of the bison on the proposed date of arrival.

- 6.2.3. Once approved, the NBP office will immediately email notification of the approval to the importer. The importer may then schedule an appointment at the port for clearance.
 - 6.2.4. A copy of the email approval notice from the NBP office must be presented to the Port VMO , along with the completed VS Form 17-29, Declaration of Importation (https://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/forms/pdf/vs17_29.pdf)
 - 6.2.5. After clearance at the port, the Port VMO will email notification to VS personnel in the destination state that the bison are en route under seal to the destination premises for inspection.
 - 6.2.6. The shipment will not be allowed entry without written (email) notification of approval.
 - 6.2.7. Contact information for the USDA APHIS VS Northern Border Port Services may be found at [VS Field Operations Port Services](#).
- 6.3 For bob calf imports, please see the pertinent information on the webpage: [Importing Live Cattle and Bison from Canada to the United States | Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#).

7. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

Please check the animal health regulations of the importing state of destination for possible additional regulations and requirements for the proposed import ([State Regulations and Import Requirements](#))