

Breadcrumb

1. [Home](#)
2. Print
3. Pdf
4. Node
5. Entity Print

USDA-Accredited Veterinarians: Certifying Pets for International Travel

Last Modified:



How To Electronically Issue Health Certificates

USDA accepts pet health certificates (for pets eligible to travel to another country) that are electronically signed by USDA-accredited veterinarians. The health certificate must be issued and submitted through the Veterinary Export Health Certification System (VEHCS).

Some countries also accept health certificates that are digitally endorsed by USDA in VEHCS. In those cases, the health certificate can be issued (signed by the USDA-accredited veterinarian) and endorsed (countersigned and embossed/stamped by USDA) entirely online. [Access VEHCS to submit an electronic health certificate.](#)

Visit [VEHCS Country Acceptance List for Live Animal Exports](#) to determine if and how VEHCS can be used for your health certificate. If the destination country isn't on the list, learn what to do [when country requirements aren't known](#).



This page is for USDA-accredited veterinarians to learn about certifying pets for international travel, completing and submitting health certificates for USDA endorsement, and using the Veterinary Export Health Certification System (VEHCS).

How To Issue Export Health Certificates

Know Your Responsibilities as an Accredited Veterinarian

The responsibilities of an accredited veterinarian issuing health certificates is outlined in [9 CFR 161.4 Standards for Accredited Veterinarian Duties](#).

Before issuing a health certificate, YOU must ensure that the:

- Correct and most current version of the health certificate, for the pet species and destination country, is being used.
- Pet meets [all requirements of the destination country](#).
- Health certificate is issued within the timeframe required by the destination country.
- Health certificate includes required and accurate information.

If the pet's destination country doesn't appear in the list, it's the owner/exporter's responsibility to contact the pertinent government official in the destination country to obtain those requirements. You'll need to review the requirements and ensure the pet meets them before issuing the health certificate. If you have any questions about this process or need further guidance, contact your [APHIS endorsement office](#).

Check Your Accreditation Status

There are **two ways** to check your USDA Veterinary Accreditation status:

1. Use the [National Veterinary Accreditation Program \(NVAP\) Lookup Tool](#).

Select "Check my accreditation status." Enter your National Accreditation Number (NAN) and last name.

2. Contact your [State's NVAP Coordinator](#).

You should also contact your State's NVAP Coordinator if the information displayed on the NVAP Lookup Tool doesn't match your understanding of your accreditation status (for example, your status is other than accredited, or you're not accredited in the State where you're currently practicing).

Best Practices for Preparing Pets To Meet Country-Specific Requirements

- Reference this presentation for an [overview of APHIS' role in the international export of animals](#).
- Have your client provide you with a completed [Pet Owner Worksheet for Preparing Visit With Accredited Veterinarian To Complete Health Certificate](#) (102.11 KB).
- Review the pet's medical records. Obtain previous records if this is a new patient or if another veterinary clinic requires medical information to complete the health certificate.
- Carefully review the [requirements for your client's destination country](#). Determine any identification, vaccinations, testing, or treatments that must be performed, including when they must be performed and in what sequence.
- Make a note of when the pet must be examined and the health certificate issued, depending on your client's travel date and destination country. DO NOT issue a health certificate if the pet doesn't meet requirements in the destination country.

- View guidance on [how to complete a VEHCS-style health certificate](#).

Submitting Health Certificates for APHIS Endorsement

Your APHIS endorsement office can accept and endorse a health certificate. You can submit your health certificate via:

Option 1: [Veterinary Export Health Certification System \(VEHCS\)](#). For more information, view [how to electronically issue health certificates](#).

OR

Option 2: Shipping. For more information, select the State or U.S. Territory you're located in to [find your APHIS endorsement office](#).

We charge fees to endorse health certificates. Learn more about APHIS [fees for endorsing health certificates](#).

Preventing Endorsement Delays

- Complete all fields of the health certificate, taking care to provide all information required in each field.
 - Only provide required information in the health certificate. For example, if the destination country only requires a rabies vaccination, don't provide information on any other vaccinations administered to the pet.
 - If a field of the health certificate is lined out or asterisked, don't complete that field.
 - If you make a mistake when completing the health certificate, start over or draw a single line through the incorrect information and initial it.
- Double check the information you entered in the health certificate, ensuring that the animal's description, identification, vaccination, testing, and treatments match your medical records and any other supporting documentation exactly.
- Double check that you followed the destination country's requirements to the letter. For example, if internal parasite treatment is required, a fecal exam isn't a substitute.
- If you didn't administer a required vaccination or perform a required test, obtain medical records documenting the administration from the veterinarian who did.

- Double check that you signed and printed your name and dated the health certificate for the actual day you issued it.
- Make sure the submission package is complete, including the finished health certificate, supporting documentation for required vaccinations and testing (when applicable), import permit issued by the destination country (when applicable), payment, and a prepaid return shipping label (for nondigitally endorsed health certificates).
- DO NOT issue the health certificate if the destination country requirements aren't met.

What To Do If an Airline Doesn't Accept the Health Certificate

What if the airline doesn't accept a country-specific health certificate?

Although a country-specific health certificate may be required by the destination country, you may also need to complete an [APHIS Form 7001](#) (438.86 KB) for the pet to board the airplane in the United States. This form may be used to demonstrate vaccinations, treatments, and examinations in the timeframe required by the airline.

Note: *If you issue two health certificates for the pet, USDA can only endorse the health certificate required by the destination country. Don't submit the APHIS Form 7001 to USDA if it's not required by the destination country.*

What if the airline doesn't accept a digitally endorsed health certificate?

If the airline doesn't recognize the digital signature and seal on the electronically issued health certificate as official, [provide this letter to the airline to resolve any concerns](#). (239.52 KB)

Related Resources

- [Frequently Asked Questions About Pet Travel for Accredited Veterinarians](#)
- [Pet Travel](#)
- [VEHCS Help](#)
- [Access VEHCS](#)
- [APHIS Endorsement Offices by State](#)
- [Find a USDA-Accredited Veterinarian](#)

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