



**Notice Regarding APHIS Live Animal Import and Third-Country  
Import Transit Permits**

This notice provides information regarding Veterinary Services (VS) live animal import permits, including applications, time frames, submission requirements, and contingency plans for third-country import transit shipments.

Effective immediately, the following applies at all U.S. ports of entry and for all live animal imports requiring an import permit.

**Import Permit Application Timeframes and Standards**

The standard processing time for routine permit applications for the import or third-country import transit of livestock (including horses), avian and non-pet birds, aquaculture animals, and germplasm is **7-10 business days** from the date of application submission. When applications are submitted after 2:30pm Eastern time, the next business day will be considered “Day 1” of this processing time. Import permit applications for more complex imports not managed by the U.S. ports of entry, as well as pet bird imports, will take longer to process. VS will process import permit applications in the order they are received, and applications are subject to standard processing user fees in accordance with [9 CFR, Part 130](#).

VS strives to meet customers’ needs. However, there are times when VS is unable to provide service within a customer’s limited time frame. In these instances, VS may ask the customer to revise the shipment date to ensure receipt of the required import permit prior to shipment. Shipping an animal before a valid import permit is issued may result in:

- VS charging an import compliance assistance fee in addition to the user fees associated with permit processing to issue or amend a permit after a shipment eligible for entry arrives at a U.S. Port of Entry.
- Entry refusal, per [9 CFR Part 93](#), if an animal arrives at a U.S. port of entry and is not eligible for entry.

**Additional Considerations for Imports:**

VS does not require import quarantine reservation information to submit an import permit application. The request for service must, however, be submitted to the port of entry VS office at least 72 hours in advance of shipment.

VS requires contagious equine metritis (CEM) quarantine permit numbers before issuing APHIS import permit for equine imports.

**Additional Considerations for Third-Country Import Transits:**

A third-country import transit is defined as a shipment that originates in a foreign country and moves through one or more U.S. ports while transiting the United States to a third-country destination.

Third-country import transits always involve a port of entry and a port of exit, which may be the same location or which may involve numerous stopping points within the United States

- The live animal commodities in these third-country import transits are not eligible for release into the United States.
- Third-country import transits of live animal commodities must occur under an import permit and meet one of the following conditions per [9 CFR Part 93](#):
  - The animals must be maintained under continuous confinement and APHIS oversight onboard a conveyance until export; OR,
  - The animals must be off-loaded and maintained under continuous confinement and APHIS oversight at an APHIS pre-approved holding facility while awaiting a connecting conveyance, and then loaded and maintained under APHIS oversight onboard the connecting conveyance until export, if qualified.
- If a shipment can't meet one of the above conditions for any reason (including unavailability of an approved holding center) or is otherwise not eligible to transit the United States, a "transit" designation will not be allowed and the shipment must be imported and then re-exported from the United States. The re-export must comply with [9 CFR Part 91](#), with paperwork needed for the re-export dependent on the animal health requirements of both the country of origin as well as the country of final destination.
- All third-country import transits through the United States must be arranged to use the shortest, most direct route possible for animal movement. The route of travel must be documented on the import permit application for APHIS review and approval.
- All third-country import transit shipments are required to submit a written contingency plan to VS with the import permit application. Please note that import permit applications will not be processed until the complete contingency plan is received. All contingency plans submitted to VS must address the following items:
  - Emergency importer/broker/animal transporter contact information for the duration of the transit in the United States, from the port of entry until departure at the port of exit.
  - Contact information for a USDA accredited veterinarian available for emergencies during the entirety of transits by land, and for each permitted port for transits by air.
  - The importer's confirmation of a plan to provide water for the animals during transit stops, should it be needed based on conditions and species.

VS recommends comprehensive contingency plan also address the following items, but these details do not need to be included in the plan submitted to VS:

- Transport conveyances/shipping containers.
  - Loading densities and space requirements.
  - Environmental/weather protections.
  - Ventilation/air supply.
  - Feed supply.
  - Management of animals that are sick, injured, or can't continue travel.
- VS Port Offices must be notified for any emergency situations.

### **Amendments/Changes to Import Permits**

Amendments to permits must be requested and completed before expiration of the permit ("void after" date on permit). Other than to correct typographical errors, the following cannot be changed as part of an amendment request, and a new permit must instead be applied for:

- Change in U.S. Port of entry
- Changes to the Countries on your Route of travel
- Change in quarantine location

Changes to these criteria change the animal health import requirements, add specific permit conditions, and/or result in changes to import quarantine reservations or land-port inspections. As a result, these changes require an importer to apply for a new permit.

If the flight information changes or there is a delayed date of arrival (still within the validity of the import permit), but all remaining information remains the same, an amendment to the import permit is not required. However, the updated flight information and date of arrival **must be submitted** to the port of entry office as soon as possible, to ensure adequate coverage will be available. If coverage is not available, VS may ask the customer to revise the shipment date.

For further information about import permit requirements, please visit the following website: [USDA APHIS VS Live Animal Imports](#)

For questions or concerns, please contact VS Strategy and Policy, Live Animal Imports at [VS.Live.Animal.Import.Export@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:VS.Live.Animal.Import.Export@aphis.usda.gov) or (301) 851-3300, option 2.