



January 2018

Questions and Answers: Importing Live Dogs into the United States

Q: What is the Animal Welfare Act?

A: Passed by Congress in 1966, the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) seeks to ensure the humane handling, care, treatment, and transportation of certain animals that are used or intended for use in research, exhibition, or as pets. Registered research facilities, carriers, and intermediate handlers and licensed dealers and exhibitors must comply with the AWA and the regulations issued thereunder, and are subject to animal welfare compliance inspections.

Q: Does the AWA place any restrictions on the importation of live dogs?

A: Yes. In 2008, Congress added a new section to the AWA involving the importation of certain live dogs. As amended, the AWA prohibits the importation of dogs into the United States for resale purposes, unless the USDA determines that the dogs are in good health, have received all necessary vaccinations, and are at least 6 months of age. The AWA further provides that the USDA, by regulation, must provide an exception to these requirements for dogs imported for research purposes or veterinary treatment. The AWA also provides an exception to the 6-month age requirement for dogs that are lawfully imported into Hawaii from the British Isles, Australia, Guam, or New Zealand, provided the dogs are not transported out of Hawaii for purposes of resale at less than 6 months of age. In 2014, the USDA's Animal Care program established specific regulations (9 C.F.R. §§ 2.150-2.153) for the importation of live dogs.

Q: What does the term "resale" mean?

A: The AWA includes a scoping definition for the term "resale." When read in context of the requirements of that section, the term "resale" includes, but is not limited to, dogs imported for sale in wholesale channels, at retail, and for adoption after arrival in the United States, as well as dogs imported for other purposes involving transfer of ownership or control of imported dogs to another person for more than de minimis consideration. We

consider de minimis to have the standard dictionary meaning, which, according to Merriam-Webster, is "lacking significance or importance; so minor as to merit disregard." Similarly, we consider "consideration" to have the standard dictionary meaning, which is defined by Merriam-Webster as "the inducement to a contract or other legal transaction; specifically: An act or forbearance or the promise thereof done or given by one party in return for the act or promise of another."

Q: Is there an exception for dogs imported by rescue organizations for subsequent placement in the United States?

A: No. The AWA does not provide exceptions to the age, vaccination, or health requirements for dogs imported into the United States for resale purposes by rescue organizations.

Q: I want to import a dog into the United States for purposes of resale. What do I need to do to comply with Animal Care's regulations?

A: Under Animal Care's regulations, any person importing a live dog into the continental United States or Hawaii for purposes of resale can do so if the following requirements are met:

- The dog is in good health;
- The dog is vaccinated for rabies and distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parvovirus, and parainfluenza virus (DHLPP);
- The dog is at least 6 months of age;
- The dog is accompanied by an import permit issued by APHIS; and
- The dog is accompanied by a health certificate and rabies vaccination certificate issued in English by a veterinarian with a valid license to practice veterinary medicine in the country of export.

Please be aware that APHIS' Veterinary Services and the Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have additional requirements for the importation of dogs. In addition, Animal Care has additional health certificate requirements for dogs transported commercially within the United States by dealers, exhibitors, operators of auction sales, brokers, departments, agencies, or instrumentalities of the United States or of any State or local government.¹ It is your responsibility to comply with all applicable Federal, State, and local requirements.

¹ Please see 9 C.F.R. §§ 2.38(h), 2.78, and 3.112 for additional information involving the domestic

transport of dogs, cats, nonhuman primates, and marine mammals.

Q. What is an import permit and how do I obtain one?

A: An import permit is a document issued by APHIS' Animal Care program authorizing the importation of live dogs for resale purposes into the United States. To obtain an import permit, you will first need to submit an application form that includes such information as the name and address of the individuals, organizations or businesses intending to export and import the dog, the number of dogs, and the date and purpose of the importation. There is no cost for applying for or obtaining an import permit. You may request an application for an import permit by contacting Animal Care at:

USDA APHIS Animal Care
Center for Animal Welfare
2312 East Bannister Road
Mailstop 1180
Kansas City, MO 64131-3011

Phone: (816) 737-4223
Fax: (816) 737-4206
Email: ac.dogimport.mailbox@aphis.usda.gov

Q: Are there exceptions from these requirements for dogs imported for resale for research purposes?

A: Yes. There are exceptions for dogs imported for resale for research purposes from the 6-month of age, vaccination, and/or good health requirements, provided that the person importing the dog submits satisfactory evidence to Animal Care at the time of his or her application for an import permit that the specific requirement would interfere with the dog's use in research, testing, or experiments in accordance with a research proposal and the proposal has been approved by the research facility's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

Q: Are there exceptions from these requirements for dogs imported for resale for veterinary treatment?

A: Yes. There are exceptions for dogs imported for resale for veterinary treatment from the 6-month of age, vaccination, and/or good health requirements, provided that the veterinary treatment cannot be obtained in the country of export and the person who

imports the dog enters into a veterinary treatment agreement with Animal Care confining the animal until the conditions specified in the agreement are met.

Q: Are there exceptions from these requirements for dogs imported into Hawaii from the British Isles, Australia, Guam, or New Zealand?

A: Yes. The 6-month of age requirement does not apply to dogs lawfully imported into Hawaii from the British Isles, Australia, Guam, and New Zealand, provided that the dog is not transported out of the State of Hawaii for purposes of resale at less than 6 months of age.

Q: Who should I contact for more information about Animal Care's importation of live dogs regulations?

A: For more information, please contact Animal Care at:

USDA APHIS Animal Care
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2312 East Bannister Road
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Kansas City, MO 64131-3011

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Additional Information

For more specific information about the Animal Welfare Act and its regulations and standards, please visit the USDA Animal Care website at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare.

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