

# What is a Records Schedule?

A records schedule (schedule) constitutes APHIS's official policy for records and information retention and disposal. The schedule provides mandatory instructions for what to do with records (and nonrecord materials) no longer needed for current Agency business. Records retention and disposal should occur at regular intervals in the normal course of business of the Agency.

Other benefits of using the APHIS Records Schedules are:

1. Ensures that the important records are organized and maintained in such a way as to be easily retrieved and identifiable as evidence of the programs activities (especially in the event of an audit, a FOIA request or a discovery for a lawsuit).
2. Conserves office space and equipment by using filing cabinets to house only active records.
3. Saves money by the regular transfer of inactive files to less costly Federal Record Center (FRC) storage areas for subsequent disposition.
4. Helps preserve those records that are valuable for historical or research purposes.
5. Stabilizes the growth of records in offices through systematic disposition of unneeded records.

Each federal agency is required by statute (36 CFR 1228) to maintain a comprehensive records schedule. This comprehensive schedule is developed by combining the General Records Schedules (containing disposal authority for records common to several or all agencies), published by the National Archives and Records Administration, with APHIS-specific schedule items or record series.

Based on careful analysis of the Agency's documentary materials, the schedules provide instructions for the retention and disposition of each record series or system and of nonrecord materials, and authorizes the systematic removal of unneeded records from offices.