# Reimbursable Over Time (ROT) User Fee: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) charges various fees to cover the costs of conducting the Reimbursable Over Time (ROT) User Fee. ROT services are import and export related services provided by Federal employees outside their regular duty hours.

APHIS regulations for the importation and exportation of animals, plants, and related agricultural products include requirements for inspection, laboratory testing, certification, and quarantine. Employees of APHIS and the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) provide inspection, testing, certification, and quarantine services at laboratories and designated ports. With some exceptions, when these services must be provided outside the employee's regular duty hours, the Government charges an hourly overtime fee for the services. The fee "reimburses" the Federal Government for the cost of providing the overtime services.

The following Federal Regulations are related to ROT; 7 CFR Part 354.1 - Overtime Services Relating to Imports and Exports; and 31 U.S. Code § 3717 - Interest and Penalty on Claims.

To keep our programs transparent this FAQs covers items that we have seen come up from our ROT customers as well as internally. The below information has been broken out in the following way:

# PPQ ROT CUSTOMERS

## What is a ROT account and how does it work?

An ROT account is set up like a charge or credit card account. All of the ROT services you receive in a month, even if they are from different field offices or are different services, will be added to your account and you will receive a monthly billing statement. The balance of this statement is due by the end of the month in which you receive it.

## Do I have to set up an account to receive services from ROT?

No, you do not need an account to have ROT services performed for you; you are able to pay for the services at the time they are performed. If you often receive services from us and you would like an account, you can apply for a ROT account. To apply for an account you will need to fill out the APHIS-192, found here: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/forms/pdf/aphis192.pdf, provide us with your W-9 (or W-8 for foreign customers) showing your current EIN/TIN, and have already used ROT services 6 times in the last year. You can email them both to ABShelpline@usda.gov.

## Who can have a ROT account?

Anyone or any company can have a ROT account after they have used our ROT services 6 times in the last year and plan on continuing to use them at least 6 times per year going forward. You will then just need to complete our application, pass our credit check and have a valid US Federal Tax ID Number (TIN/EIN/SSN). Each Federal Tax ID Number is allowed one APHIS ROT account.

## Do I need a ROT account if I already have another User Fee account?

Yes. There are many types of user fee services that APHIS performs including but not limited to ROT, AQI, VS, etc. Each of these services has their own set of user fees, policies and procedures and therefore each one requires its own account. It is possible that a company uses APHIS for multiple different services and will have more than one account with APHIS.

## How long does it take to set up a ROT account?

It usually takes 3-5 business days to set up your account, but it may take longer if additional credit references need to be verified in the process. You should continue requesting all your services on a cash only basis until you are notified your account has been approved.

## What are the current ROT rates?

You can find out more information about ROT under 7 CFR Part 354.1, including the current ROT rates.

## I looked up the regulation and I still do not understand how the hours and rates are calculated on my invoice, who do I contact to figure this out?

You should contact the ROT field office where your service was requested to help you understand your charges. If you look at the bottom left corner, box #15, of your invoice you will see the phone number of the field office where the service was performed.

## Why do I get both an invoice and an account statement?

After you have received your services the field office will give you an invoice for your records. Then, at the end of the month you will receive an account statement from the finance office listing all of your invoices for the month and the total due on your account. Again, much like how your credit card company does it.

## How can I make a payment to my account?

There are multiple ways to pay your ROT account; however the preferred way is to pay by card using APHIS www.pay.gov. You can get further directions on how to use the pay.gov website as well as other payment options on our website by reviewing the ROT account payment types.

## How are my payments applied to my account?

As required by regulation your payments are applied to the oldest invoice first, which may not necessarily be the one you intend to pay.

## Do I pay each individual invoice or make one payment each month?

Much like a credit card you are expected to make only one payment each month which will cover all the services listed on your account statement for that month. When customers try to make more than one payment each month it results in accounts not being kept current for multiple reasons. Any accounts not kept current each month will be placed on COD, suspended or permanently closed.

## Can I make one large payment and use it up over the year?

This is not allowed because this account is a credit account; not some type of pre-paid account. The account is expected to be paid in full according to the monthly statement each month. Any over payments will be refunded back to the customer or turned over to Treasury Unclaimed.

## How are my payments applied to my account?

As required by regulation your payments are applied to the oldest invoice first, which may not necessarily be the one you intend to pay. We highly recommend that you pay based on the total due on your monthly statements, not by individual invoices.

## I am having some issues with my invoice, who do I contact for that?

You should contact the ROT field office where your service was requested to help you with your invoice issues such as incorrect billings, backup documentation, questions on the service that was billed, etc. If you look at the bottom left corner, box #15, of your invoice you will see the phone number of the field office where the service was performed. If you need a duplicate copy of your invoice you can send your request to ABShelpline@usda.gov.

## I did not get my monthly account statement. Who should I contact?

You can get another monthly statement by sending a request to ABShelpline@usda.gov. You should verify your current mailing address and primary contact information that we have on file to keep this from happening again in the future. Please include your customer account number, your name or business name, and a brief summary of your request in all messages to us.

## What do I do if my ROT account got placed on a cash only basis (COD)?

An account gets placed on a cash only basis (COD) if the account has not been paid in full within 60 days from the Closing Date on the monthly statement. This means you will not be able to charge services to your ROT account; you can still receive ROT services but you will need to pay at the time of service. Once the account is paid and in good standing you will be able to charge your ROT services to your account again. To correct this issue faster, you should verify your account balance and process your payment at APHIS www.pay.gov . Please note that credit accounts that have recurring instances of past due status are at risk for permanent closure.

## My account got suspended, what does that mean?

An account gets placed in suspense, or is suspended, if the account has not been paid in full within 90 days from the Closing Date on the monthly statement. When an account is suspended you are not able to receive any ROT services until the account is paid and in good standing. To correct this issue faster, you should verify your account balance and process your payment at APHIS www.pay.gov. Please note that credit accounts that have recurring instances of past due status are at risk for permanent closure.

## Why was my ROT account closed?

Accounts will be closed permanently if they have been in COD or suspense status more than 3 times in a year. If you are having account issues please contact us right away to see if we can help to avoid permanent closure.

## I received a past due notice but have paid all my invoices, what do I do?

The best thing to do would be to request your account activity report from ABShelpline@usda.gov and compare this to your records. If you find a discrepancy you should notify us right away to get it resolved. During this process your account may be put on a cash only basis until the account is reconciled.

## I found an error on my invoice, how do I get it corrected?

You should immediately notify the field office where your service was requested and work with them to get the invoice corrected. The financial office in Minneapolis, MN, does not have the authority to change invoices. If your due date is close you can notify the financial office to put your invoice in Dispute status until you resolve the discrepancy with the field office.

## I think my monthly account statement is incorrect. What should I do?

It is the responsibility of the account holder to reconcile their monthly statement checking for accuracy in both invoices and payments applied to their account. If you find a discrepancy please contact the financial office right away by emailing the details, including supporting documents, to ABShelpline@usda.gov. Please include your customer account number, your name or business name, and a brief summary of your request in all messages to us.

## My company only pays off purchase orders, where can I request one?

One option some customers have found helpful is to provide the field office with your purchase order number at the time of service and request that they put it in the remarks on the invoice.

## Need more information?

Please contact your ROT Debt Management Specialist:

Accounts that start with A-L: Shin-Jeong Christensen (612) 336-3262
Accounts that start with M-Z: Bonnie Ketola (612) 336-3267
Email: ABShelpline@usda.gov

You will also find more information related to AHPIS at [www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/business-services/financial-management-division/financial-operations-branch](www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/business-services/financial-management-division/financial-operations-branch).

# PPQ ROT MILITARY CUSTOMERS

## How is a ROT Military account different from other ROT accounts?

A ROT military account differs from other ROT accounts in how the account is billed; it follows all other account conditions as listed above in PPQ ROT customers. Military accounts do not receive a monthly account statement, instead they get an individual bill for each invoice billed out by the field office. The Minneapolis office sends out each bill and a copy of the invoice as it is entered in the financial system.

## What payments options are available for a Military account?

Military ROT accounts can be paid the same as the above PPQ ROT customer accounts, more information can be found here ROT account payment types. In addition to this they can also be paid using a Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request (MIPR) or a Miscellaneous Obligation/Reimbursement Document (MORD).

## Who is the Debt Management Specialist for ROT Military accounts?

The Debt Management Specialist for these accounts is:

Bonnie Ketola (612) 336-3267
Email: ABShelpline@usda.gov

# PPQ ROT EMPLOYEES

## Billings/e89s

All APHIS employees that are billing customers should do so accurately and timely in order to recoup the cost of providing the overtime PPQ services for the Agency.

### Why are the serial numbers for the e89s so important?

According to A-123 (auditor rules), which we are required to follow, each accounting document must contain a unique reference number or serial number. When you start a new e89 make sure it has a new unused serial number. When in doubt, please generate a new serial number.

### Where do I send my customer account e89s?

As of February 2018, 89s are no longer mailed to Minneapolis and are now required to be uploaded to the SharePoint site. In order to have consistency across all offices it is required that the e89 be named using only the serial number.

### Where do I send my COD 89s?

We DO NOT need a copy of COD 89s to be sent to us here. However, a copy does need to be sent into the lockbox with the customer payment to ensure correct posting to the financial system.

### How do I know the correct ROT amounts to charge my customers?

You should only be charging ROT fees when you are on OT pay and the regulations allow for it. Refer to regulation 7 CFR Part 354.1 and the AQI FAQs for determining if you should charge ROT fees and the appropriate amount to charge.

### What do I do if I incorrectly billed an e89?

You should not correct the original e89 once it has been submitted and billed to the customer account. If you need to make a correction you should make a new e89 and put the original e89 serial number to be replaced in Box 6.

### How much information can go in the Description Filed (Box 11 right column)?

The Description Filed is important because the customer can see it on their monthly statements and it will help them to reconcile all their monthly services to their monthly statements. Unfortunately there are some limitations here; only the field that is on the same row as the hours will appear on the statement and only the first 26 characters will be used here. For example you cannot fill out one row of hours and then use the description filed for the next 5 rows to describe the services. In this example the customer would only see what you put in the first row. We cannot tell you what to enter here because it will depend on what each individual customer needs. We recommend that you communicate with your customer to see if they have special items they would like in this field or for you use your best judgment based on what you think would help your customer.

## How is the billing different for ROT Military accounts versus other ROT accounts?

Each military 89 is manually entered and not mass uploaded into SharePoint like non Military 89s. Since these 89s are not in SharePoint each Military 89 must be sent to the Minneapolis office, scanning to mrp.billing.requests@usda.gov is preferred for quicker processing. Once these are received in our office we then manually enter them into the financial system.

## Do I need to provide the customer with a copy of the e89?

Yes, they will need this to reconcile their monthly statement. The monthly account statement that the customer receives is only a summary of services provided and not a break-down of all the details; the individual service details come from the e89 itself. If the PPQ employee providing the service does not provide the customer with this documentation they often will not be able to pay their bill. The financial office in Minneapolis, MN, only prints and mails out monthly statements for each customer, not each individual e89.

# Payments/Collections

All APHIS employees receiving Agency funds are responsible for properly handling and safeguarding the funds until they deposit them into a lockbox. Each employee is liable and accountable for all funds received.

## My job is to provide my customers with services, why am I collecting payments?

Customers who do not have an ROT account and customers who do have an ROT account but it is currently in COD status are required by federal regulation to pay at the time of services for any ROT services provided according to 7 CFR Part 354.1.

## What do I do if I receive cash from a COD customer?

Do not send cash through the mail; employees must convert cash collected to a cashier's check or money order. When doing this no part of the collection may be used to pay for the cost of purchasing the cashier's check or money order. The cost of purchasing the cashier's check or money order should be submitted for reimbursement to FOB, Financial Operations Service Team (FOST) using an SF-1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business.

## For COD 89s, how do I know what Accounting Code to put in Box 21?

The accounting code is very important and must be correct because that is where your collection gets its funding coding. PPQ uses this information to determine the budget, so if it is not correct there can be a big impact to PPQs budget and fees. COD accounting code information should contain a Short Hand Code (SHC) and Revenue Source Code (RSC)

## Do Accounting Codes ever change?

Yes! At the beginning of each fiscal year, October 1st, your accounting code will change. The first digit of the account code will change with the new fiscal year. Please check with the billings team or PPQ financial headquarters to ensure you have changed your accounting code correctly.

## Where do I mail COD payments?

Send all of your COD payments along with copies of the COD 89s to the following Lockbox, NOT to Minneapolis:

USDA, APHIS, ROT
Po Box 979042
St. Louis, MO 63179-9000

## How often do I have to send in COD payments I have collected to the Lock Box?

APHIS employees are required to collect and deposit COD collections in a timely manner according to TFM, Part 5, Section 8030.10, "Agency Deposits" & Section 8030.20, "Timeliness of Deposits." Agencies will deposit receipts totaling $5,000 or more on the same day received prior to depository cutoff time. Moneys received too late in the day to meet the deposit cutoff time must be deposited the following business day. Collections totaling less than $5,000 may be accumulated and deposited when the total reaches $5,000, however, deposits will be made by Thursday of each week, regardless of the amount accumulated. If Thursday is a U.S. Government holiday, then those deposits will be made by Friday of that week.

## A COD customer needs a refund, how do they get one?

If you have already sent in the COD payment to the Lock Box you will need to email the ABS Helpline with a request to refund the customer that includes the customer contact information, payment information and if necessary a corrected e89.

## We did not collect the payment before services as required by federal regulation and now a COD customer is not paying us, what do we do next to collect?

It is required by 7 CFR Part 354 that all customers not using an ROT account pay the officer performing the service before that service is executed. If there is a rare instance that this did not happen and now the office is not able to collect from the customer, you can contact the ABS Helpline for further guidance and options available for collection.

## How do account customers pay their monthly statements?

Customers are able to pay their monthly statements many ways; however the preferred way is to pay by card using APHIS www.pay.gov. You can see further directions on how to use the pay.gov website as well as other payment options on our website by reviewing the ROT account payment types.

# Customer Accounts

Not all ROT customers will have an account, they need to qualify for an account. Customers that do not have account must pay at the time of services and are considered to be cash on delivery (COD) customers.

## How do I know what customers have an ROT account?

Go to SharePoint in the Debt Management Info folder, there you will find a current list of all ROT customers.

## How do I know the status of a customer account?

Go to SharePoint in the Debt Management Info folder, there you will find a current list of all ROT customers that will break down if the customer account is in good status or on COD or Suspend.

## I have a customer that wants to set up an ROT account, what should they do?

You can have them contact the ARTA team at ABShelpline@usda.gov with any questions or help opening an ROT account. If they would like to apply for an account they will need to fill out the APHIS-192, found here: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/forms/pdf/aphis192.pdf, provide us with their W-9 (or W-8 for foreign customers) showing their current EIN/TIN, and have already used ROT services 6 times in the last year.

## My customer is asking me questions about their monthly account statement, who can answer those for them?

You can direct them to the ARTA team at ABShelpline@usda.gov to answer questions about payments, COD/suspend status, etc. We are not able to answer questions about individual 89 charges because we do not do that work. So, any types of questions related to actual work performed, hours charged or corrections will need to get answered by the field office that performed the services and issued the 89.

## A customer is on COD, do I really have to collect at the time of service? Why can't I just bill to their account?

Yes. According to 7 CFR Part 354.1 (e) 1 *"Any principal, or any person, firm, partnership, corporation, or other legal entity requesting Sunday, holiday, or overtime services of an Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service or U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspector, and who has a debt to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service or U.S. Customs and Border Protection more than 60 days delinquent, must pay the inspector before service is provided."*

## A customer is on Suspend, do I really have to not provide them with service?

Yes. According to 7 CFR Part 354.1 (f) *"Reimbursable Sunday, holiday, or overtime services will be denied to any principal, or any person, firm, partnership, corporation, or other legal entity who has a debt to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service or U.S. Customs and Border Protection more than 90 days delinquent. Services will be denied until the delinquent debt is paid."*

# Contacts

## Who do I contact in Minneapolis if I have questions or issues that need to be addressed?

There are two different teams in Minneapolis that work with PPQ ROT user fees, they are the Billings Team (BCT) and the Accounts Receivable Team (ARTSA). BCT can help you with all types of billings questions and ARTSA can help with any type of customer account questions. Some examples are below.

Direct your questions/issues to BCT at mrp.billing.requests@usda.gov for questions like:

- How do I correct an 89 I already uploaded to SharePoint?
- Where do I send my COD e89s?

Direct your questions/issues to ARTSA at ABShelpline@usda.gov for questions like:

- My customer is confused as to how to pay their monthly statement.
- My customer does not know why their account is on COD or Suspend.