



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

Plant Protection
and Quarantine

Plant Health
Programs

4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD
20737

Subject: Policy and Procedures for Hand-Carrying Living Organisms under a USDA APHIS PPQ Permit

A specific authorization on a valid USDA APHIS PPQ permit (PPQ Form 526) is required for persons to move any of the following living organisms in personal baggage (i.e. "hand-carry") into the United States or any of its Territories or possessions from any place outside thereof, or from any Territory or possession into any other Territory or possession or the Continental United States: plant pests, Federally listed noxious weeds, parasitic plants, bees, earthworms or biological control agents.

The following considerations apply:

1. A new permit or an amendment to an existing permit authorizing hand-carrying will only be issued to persons transporting organisms to facilities currently approved to receive and contain them, or following an inspection of a newly proposed receiving facility by PPQ personnel and a determination that the facility is physically and operationally adequate to contain the permitted organisms.
2. An authorization to hand-carry shall only be issued to citizens or permanent United States residents with a valid Passport or Permanent Visa. Hand-carry authorizations shall not be issued to foreign nationals or individuals with temporary Visas.
3. Applications must specifically request a hand-carry option, and identify all individuals the applicant seeks to have authorized to hand-carry. Applications must include current address, telephone number, fax number, and email addresses of individuals not associated with the receiving facility who the permit holder seeks to have authorized to hand-carry.
4. An authorization to hand-carry is not transferable and cannot be assigned to other individuals or organizations not identified in the permit.
5. Requests to hand-carry are authorized based on factors including: risk of the organisms to United States agriculture and the environment, country of origin of the shipment, and source of the organisms (e.g., field collected or laboratory reared/processed).
6. An authorization to hand-carry shall be denied for good cause when the desired organisms are deemed to pose exceptional risk, when the facility's containment capabilities are likely to be exceeded, or when there is substantial risk of diversion of organisms from reaching containment. Other factors used in the determination include applicant history in complying with the terms and conditions of prior permits and information provided by the applicant supporting the need to hand-carry.
7. An authorization to hand-carry includes only the organism identified in the permit. Presence of unauthorized organisms in any packages on an individual authorized to hand-carry is a permit violation. Presence of unauthorized organism at the receiving containment facility at any time is also evidence of a permit violation.
8. Denial of a request to hand-carry shall not prejudice the issuance of a permit for receipt of the organism by other means.



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The following restrictions apply to Permit Amendments:

1. Requests to amend an existing permit must be supported in writing. Send mail requests to : USDA APHIS PPQ Pest Permit Evaluations, 4700 River Road Unit 133, Riverdale, MD 20737. Send Fax requests to: 301-734-5392.
2. Requests to amend an existing permit must be signed by the original permit holder, cite the permit number, and contain the name of all individuals the permit holder seeks to have authorized to hand-carry.
3. Requests to amend must include current address, telephone, fax number, and email addresses of individuals not associated with the receiving facility who the permit holder seeks to have authorized to hand-carry.
4. Amendments to existing permits require five to ten working days for processing as long as the receiving facility has already been evaluated for adequacy by PPQ. Requests for amendments may be processed by the Permit Unit as a separate permit application when administratively convenient.

The following conditions apply to all hand-carry authorizations:

1. Ten to twenty days prior to each hand-carry incident, the permit holder or designee must notify the PPQ Permit Compliance Officer by email (pest.permits@aphis.usda.gov) or telephone (866-524-5421) to provide specific information on the hand carrier's identity, the anticipated first port of arrival into the United States, the expected date of arrival, the time, and, if travel is by airline, the flight number. The Compliance Officer will notify Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Agriculture Inspectors at the port of entry to document and facilitate the entry of the organisms. PPQ will issue a red-and-white label authorizing hand-carrying through the specific port-of-entry. The notification must precede the date of arrival by a sufficient period of time for PPQ to issue the label and send it to the permit holder.
2. The hand carrier must indicate that living organisms are being imported under a USDA permit on the Customs Declaration form if such form is required at the port of entry.
3. At the port of entry, individuals carrying permitted organism must also present to CBP Agriculture Inspectors the following articles: U.S. Passport or Visa, a copy of the PPQ Permit authorizing hand-carrying including all applicable attachments and a valid red-and-white shipping label (PPQ Form 599) issued to that numbered permit.
4. Inspection by CBP Agriculture Inspectors must confirm that all hand carried articles are securely packaged as per the permit conditions. Upon clearance, the package will be sealed by CBP Agriculture Inspectors with CBP Agriculture Quarantine security tape (yellow) for movement to the authorized facility. In the event that a problem is detected, the CBP Agriculture Inspector may seize the package and require its movement to the nearest PPQ Inspection Station for processing or clearance. The permit holder will be responsible for all costs incidental to such forwarding.
5. After CBP Agriculture confirmation and clearance through the first port of entry into the United States, hand carried organisms must be transported directly to the containment facility authorized in the permit. The sealed package must not be opened until it arrives at the authorized facility.

6. Upon arrival at the facility, the PPQ Compliance Officer must be notified within 24 hours that the organisms arrived and that the package remained sealed until arrival. Notification may be by telephone (866-524-5421), fax (301-734-5392) or email (pest.permits@aphis.usda.gov). Notification must be by an independent third party (e.g. containment facility director, campus biosafety officer, etc.) identified by the applicant and listed in the permit's conditions. A PPQ inspector may also visit the facility to confirm the arrival and integrity of the package and its contents.
7. Violation of any permit condition is subject to civil penalties of up to \$50,000 per violation for individuals and \$250,000 per violation for other entities. Criminal penalties may also apply.

To coordinate implementation with Customs and Border Protection, these policies and procedures become effective on March 1, 2006. However, current permit holders and applicants may request authorizations to hand-carry immediately. These policies and procedures do not apply to the hand-carrying of living organisms transiting the United States and its Territories or possessions.