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Frequently Asked Questions About Live Animal Exports

Last Modified:

Find answers to common questions related to exporting live animals outside of the United States.

If you're traveling with a pet, learn about requirements for international pet travel or view our frequently asked questions about pet travel.

Process

Expand All

What documents do I need to export my animals?

The documents needed vary depending on the destination, species, intended use of the animal, and mode of transportation or carrier (airplane, ship, truck). Please visit International Regulations (IRegs) for Animal Exports and choose your destination country from the drop-down menu to view available health certificates by species.

All pre-export requirements, including health certificates, must be completed and documented by a veterinarian licensed to practice medicine in the State where they are working. Unless there is a country-specific exception listed on the APHIS website, the veterinarian issuing the health certificate must also be accredited by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

You should also contact your selected carrier for any additional documentation the carrier may require to move your animals.

How do I obtain a health certificate for my animal?

You must have your animal examined by a veterinarian. If the animal meets the destination country's requirements, your veterinarian can issue the health certificate. The health certificate is then endorsed by APHIS.

Contact your veterinarian to obtain a correct and properly completed export health certificate. If your veterinarian has questions about which health certificate to use, please have them contact your local APHIS Veterinary Export Trade Services Endorsement Office via email, fax, or phone.

Reminder of health certificate responsibility: Anyone who makes a false, fictional, or fraudulent statement on this document, or uses such document knowing it to be false, fictional, or fraudulent, may be subject to a fine of not more than $10,000 or imprisonment of not more than 5 years or both (18 U.S.C 1001).

How long does the process take before I can export my animal?

Get started as soon as possible! The process could take a few weeks to many months, depending on the importing country's requirements. Some countries require an isolation or quarantine period, lasting from weeks to months, before an animal is eligible for entry into that country. Start learning the requirements of your destination country as soon as you can.

Also, inform your veterinarian of your travel plans as early as possible. Their involvement is critical to the process.

What if I'm unable to fulfill the testing/treatment/status requirements on the protocol or in an import permit?

Talk with your local APHIS endorsement office. We can recommend possible solutions. If you cannot fulfill the requirements, the document may need revision, or the destination country may not accept the animal species you wish to ship.

Health Certificate

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Does one health certificate work in all countries?

No. Each country establishes its own rules for entry of animals from the United States. You will need to meet the requirements of the destination country. Some countries require a specific health certificate they have developed. Many of these may be found at International Regulations (IRegs).

Health requirements and certificates may change at any time, so it is important that you check one of the websites referenced on the IRegs page for the most current regulations before exporting your animals.

How do I get my animal health certificate stamped by the USDA? Can I mail my certificate, or do I need an appointment to meet in person?

The "stamping" process is also called Federal endorsement. Endorsement is a final review process, where APHIS Veterinary Services officials verify the information on

the certificate as accurate and ensure that the animal meets the destination country's requirements. Many countries require the Federal government to stamp or endorse the health certificate before an animal departs from the United States.

An APHIS Veterinary Export Trade Services Endorsement Office must review all documents supporting the health certificate. Please bring in or include these documents when presenting a certificate for endorsement. Laboratory results should be an original copy. If an original copy is unavailable, have the laboratory fax the results directly to the endorsement office you're using.

To save time and effort, contact your local APHIS endorsement office to determine the best way to get your documents endorsed. Options generally include mailing your documents or scheduling an appointment with your endorsement office. If you choose to mail the documents via regular mail or overnight service (FedEx or UPS, for example), please include your check or money order for processing fees made payable to "USDA." Enclose a preaddressed, prepaid return method for overnight mail. We recommend that you use a tracking method with the carrier to verify that the documents have arrived at their destination.

Do I bring my animal with me to the APHIS endorsement office when I get the health certificate stamped/endorsed?

No. You do not bring your animal to the APHIS endorsement office. We only need to see the health certificate and supporting documents you have received from your veterinarian, the destination country, or both.

How much does it cost to have the health certificate stamped?

The fee for stamping/endorsement varies by the number of animals traveling and the number of tests required for the health certificate. This table lists user fees for endorsing export certificates.

How long does it take to stamp/endorse a health certificate? When can I expect my certificate to be returned?

Contact the APHIS endorsement office in your State for processing times. If your health certificate is not accurate or is on the incorrect form, our office will inform you or your veterinarian of the errors. We will guide you on how to complete the correct form accurately.

Veterinarian

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Do countries require that the veterinarian who completes the health certificate be accredited or "USDA-Approved"?

It depends on the country. Check the requirements from the destination country to determine whether an accredited veterinarian must complete the health certificate. Many countries, including all of the European Union, require the veterinarian who examines your animal and issues the health certificate to be federally accredited. Some countries refer to accredited veterinarians using various terms such as "competent authority," "official veterinarian," or "issuing authorized veterinarian."

What is an accredited veterinarian, and how do I find one?

The U.S. accredited veterinarian program is a voluntary program that certifies private veterinary practitioners to work cooperatively with Federal veterinarians and State animal health officials. For more information, visit National Veterinary Accreditation Program. To find an accredited veterinarian, ask your regular veterinarian if they are accredited and feel comfortable running the required test for export of your animal(s). If your veterinarian is not accredited or comfortable with the process, ask them to recommend someone or use our search tool at Locate an Accredited Veterinarian.

Country

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The species I want to export isn't listed under the destination country. What do I do?

For requirements not listed, APHIS has not been officially informed by the foreign country about the requirements for your species. We recommend you contact animal health officials in the destination country for more information.

If you are unable to obtain information about the requirements from the destination country, we recommend that your animal travel with a health certificate (for example, APHIS Form 7001 (438.8 KB)) issued by your veterinarian. Although it may not be required, we strongly suggest that the health certificate be issued by a USDA-accredited veterinarian and endorsed by APHIS. To find contact information for a destination country, visit these websites:

- World Organisation for Animal Health—Members
- U.S. Department of State—Contact Info for Foreign Embassies and Consulates

The document listed seems old. How do I know if I can use it?

Ask your local APHIS Veterinary Export Trade Services Endorsement Office. We can tell you whether the current posted requirements can still be certified.

The documents are only in English. Do I need to have them translated?

Contact the appropriate ministry in the destination country. A ministry official will tell you if the country requires a translation or bilingual document before the animal

can enter the country. The ministry might have a bilingual copy of the document available for you. APHIS can only endorse documents that are in English or are bilingual.

Need help with a different issue?

Contact Your Local APHIS Endorsement Office
Print