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Export Aquatic Animals: RAEF Production Facility Approval Plus Premises Freedom

Last Modified:

Follow Steps 1-5 below for facilities that breed, produce, grow, and/or package live aquatic animals on their premises AND must meet “premises freedom” prior to international export (for at least 1 country).

[View RAEF Process Flow Chart](#)

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Step 1: Complete and Submit Pre-inspection Documentation

To obtain or renew a RAEF Production Facility Approval + Premises Freedom, the facility must complete the following on an annual basis (i.e., every 365 days):

- a. Review, complete, and sign the [RAEF Production Facility Pre-Inspection Package](#) (245.67 KB).
- b. Review, complete, and sign the [RAEF Premises Freedom Evaluation Package](#) (841.69 KB).

- c. Submit the signed RAEF Production Facility Pre-Inspection Package and RAEF Premises Freedom Evaluation Package via email to VETS.RAEF@usda.gov, and attach any written requirements as instructed in the packages.
- d. The APHIS VS Office servicing your area will review the RAEF Production Facility Pre-Inspection Package and RAEF Premises Freedom Evaluation Package. If additional information is needed or there are any questions, then they will contact you via e-mail.
- e. Once the RAEF Premises Freedom Evaluation Package is complete, the APHIS VS Office will review the information as described in STEP 3.
- f. Once the RAEF Production Facility Pre-Inspection Package is complete, the APHIS VS Office will complete and sign Part 1 of the [RAEF Production Facility Inspection Checklist](#). (694.76 KB)
- g. The APHIS VS Office will contact the APHIS VS Field Veterinarian in your area and send the RAEF Production Facility Pre-Inspection Package and RAEF Production Facility Inspection Checklist prior to the APHIS VS Field Veterinarian scheduling the site inspection.

Step 2: Undergo Facility Inspection

The APHIS VS Field Veterinarian will contact the facility directly to schedule a date and time for the inspection. During the inspection, the APHIS VS Field Veterinarian will complete and sign Part 2 of the RAEF Production Facility Inspection Checklist.

All facility inspections are subject to hourly user fees which include travel to/from the facility, time on-site for the actual inspection, and all time needed to review paperwork before/after the visit.

Once the inspection is complete, the APHIS VS Field Veterinarian will send the [RAEF Production Facility Inspection Checklist](#) (694.76 KB) to the APHIS VS Office for review.

Step 3: Initial Review of Inspection Documentation

The APHIS VS Office will conduct an initial review of Part 2 of the RAEF Production Facility Inspection Checklist and supporting documentation for completeness. If additional information is needed, they will contact the APHIS VS Field Veterinarian.

Once complete, the APHIS VS Office will countersign Part 2 of the RAEF Production Facility Inspection Checklist, and send the following to the APHIS VS Aquatic Trade Staff for review and final approval.

- [RAEF Production Facility Pre-Inspection Package](#) (245.67 KB)
- [RAEF Production Facility Inspection Checklist](#) (694.76 KB)
- Draft RAEF Production Facility Approval Letter

The APHIS VS Office will review the RAEF Premises Freedom Evaluation Package. If additional information is needed, they will contact the facility. The Premises Freedom Letter will be issued as described in step 5.

Step 4: Final Review of Inspection Documentation

The APHIS VS Aquatic Trade Staff will conduct the final review of all inspection documents. If additional information is needed, they will contact the APHIS VS Office.

Once the facility's final document review is completed and approval is recommended, the APHIS VS Aquatic Team will update the facility's information on the APHIS RAEF Master Spreadsheet¹ and notify the APHIS VS Office.

¹The RAEF Master Spreadsheet is an APHIS central database that captures the status of your facility's approval and other details such as the type of RAEF approval, countries and species for which the facility is approved to export, and contact information. When an export health certificate is submitted for endorsement, the APHIS VS Office verifies the facility's eligibility by referencing the RAEF Master Spreadsheet.

Step 5: Receive Letters

Once steps 1-4 are complete, the APHIS VS Office will issue two letters related to the RAEF inspection directly to the facility via email:

RAEF Production Facility Approval Letter which will outline the countries and species for which the facility is approved to export. Premises Freedom Letter which will confirm compliance with country-specific premises freedom testing requirements.

To obtain APHIS endorsement of an export health certificate that requires premises freedom from pathogens of concern at the facility/premises level, the exporting facility must provide a copy of the Premises Freedom Letter at the time of certificate submission as proof that pre-export testing and biosecurity requirements have been met prior to each shipment.

To maintain facility approval under RAEF, the facility must be inspected and approved every 365 days.

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