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# Guidance for Importing or Transiting Live Animals

Last Modified:

If you are importing or transiting live animals that are regulated by APHIS Veterinary Services, there are import and permit requirements you need to follow. Import requirements vary depending on the specific commodity and country of origin. Importers are responsible for meeting **all** requirements to avoid refusal of entry or penalties due to noncompliance with import requirements.

Use the guidance below to make sure you are importing or transiting live animals safely and legally into or through the United States.

## Live Animal and Germplasm Imports

An import is a shipment that originates in a foreign country or territory and is shipped to the United States as the final destination. Import requirements for live animals vary by species but may include an import permit, health certificate, import inspection, quarantine, and in some cases, a contingency plan. Some aspects of the import process require payment for services rendered.

Any regulated live animal shipment must be routed directly to the United States with no stops except those designated on the import permit. Regulated animal semen,

embryos, oocytes, and cloning tissue can be imported into the United States **only** from the region where it was collected.

The importer of record (importer) is the person or entity who brings live animals into the United States from another country for trade. If APHIS issues an import permit, the importer is the permit applicant / recipient. **It is the importer's responsibility to:**

- Determine the [import requirements](#) for the specific commodity you are importing.
- Apply for the necessary import permit(s) via the [APHIS eFile system](#). Allow APHIS at least 7 business days to process a routine live animal import permit application.
- Contact port services about activities related to U.S. ports of entry or Federal import quarantines. Visit our [trade contacts directory](#) to look up your nearest APHIS Port Services office.
- Determine whether the species you are importing is also regulated under the jurisdiction of any additional Federal agencies and contact them. Please see the species-specific import information ([links below](#)) for more information.
- Check the requirements of the [individual U.S. State or Territory](#) to which you are importing.
- View the [Notice Regarding APHIS Live Animal Import and Third-Country Import Transit Permits](#) (272.29 KB)
- Find information about [APHIS-recognized animal health statuses of foreign regions](#) for specific animal diseases, pests, or acceptable commodities.

## Transiting Live Animals or Germplasm Through the United States

U.S. import transits are foreign-origin shipments that move through one or more U.S. ports on their way to a third-country destination.

- Any regulated live animals and their germplasm transiting the United States requires an import transit permit. Make sure to read [Notice Regarding APHIS Live Animal Import and Third-Country Import Transit Permits](#) (272.29 KB).
- Transit shipments must be routed directly through a U.S. port with no stops except those designated on the import permit.

- Health documentation for third-country import transit shipments varies dependent upon the commodity and the disease status of the country of origin. Additional information is available by commodity.
- A written contingency plan is required for all import transit shipments. You must submit this plan with the permit application (VS 17-129) via [APHIS eFile system](#) or to [laipermits@usda.gov](mailto:laipermits@usda.gov). The importer is also responsible for submitting the contingency plan to the port of entry with the service request.

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