Breadcrumb

1. Home
2. Print
3. Pdf
4. Node
5. Entity Print

Importing Live Equines and Equine Germplasm into the United States

Last Modified:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulates the importation of equines and their hybrids into the United States. Equines are defined as horses, mules, donkeys, asses, and zebras. Germplasm includes semen, embryos, oocytes, and cloning tissue.

With few exceptions, USDA requires the following for **all equine imports**:

- USDA import permit
- Veterinary export health certificate
- Port inspection
- Import quarantine (**only required for live equines**)

Jump To...

USDA Import Requirements USDA Transit Process Requirements for Returning U.S.-Origin Horses

Country-Specific Import Requirements

Use the dropdown below to view country-specific import requirements, including the quarantine duration (either 3, 7, or 60 days); required health certification statements; and any additional protocols that may apply.

Select the country or countries where your equines resided (for live equines or equine germplasm). For U.S.-origin horses, select the country or countries your horse traveled to before returning to the United States.

Select a Country Select a Country ▼ Go

USDA Import Requirements

Expand All

USDA Import Permit

Use the Veterinary Services Permitting Assistant (VSPA) to confirm your live animal import permit requirements. Select the "Live Animals" tab. The VSPA will provide you with a summary of required import documents, including permit applications, certificates, informational letters, and more.

- Live equine and equine germplasm shipments must be accompanied by a USDA import permit, **except for certain shipments** from Canada and Mexico. See Importing Live Equines and Germplasm From Canada and Importing Live Equines and Germplasm From Mexico for more information.
- Importers should apply for an import permit online using APHIS eFile. This will expedite the permitting process and enable users to track the status of their permits, confirm receipt, and easily renew or amend existing permits. Visit Animal Health Permits to learn more about applying for an import permit, including paper applications.
- Importers must submit the import permit application at least 7 business days prior to shipping live equines or equine germplasm.
- An import permit is valid for **14 days** for live equines and equine germplasm.
- APHIS charges a fee for processing import permit applications and for amending and/or renewing a permit, if applicable.

U.S.-returning horses and horses from other contagious equine metritis (CEM)-free regions that temporarily export to CEM-affected regions for no more than 90 days before seeking entry into the United States **must** obtain an import permit prior to leaving the CEM-free region of origin.

Veterinary Health Certificate

Health Certificates for Live Equine(s) and Equine Germplasm

- A valid official, original, paper export health certificate, written in English or with English translation, is required for entry, except for equine semen from Canada.
- The official health certificate must be issued by either a full-time salaried government veterinarian of the national Competent Veterinary Authority (the exporting country's national government agency responsible for animal health) or an authorized veterinarian acting on their behalf. Each official health certificate must be endorsed by the full-time salaried government veterinarian of the exporting country's national Competent Veterinary Authority.

- The **original** paper export health certificate, with wet pen and ink endorsement, **must** accompany the shipment upon arrival; APHIS **will not accept a photocopy** of the export health certificate.

Health Certificate for Live Equine(s)

- **Beginning October 1, 2026, APHIS will only accept health certificates that reflect the provisions of the new model certificate at all ports of entry. Qualifying equines arriving with a certificate that cannot be brought into compliance will be refused entry.**
  - Model Health Certificate for the Export of Qualifying Equines to the United States of America from Countries Other than Canada and Mexico (946.38 KB)
  - Guidance for Completing the MHC for the Export of Qualifying Equines to the United States (302.59 KB)
  - Example Supplemental Health Certificate for Qualifying Equines That Reside in Multiple Countries Preceding Export to the United States (188.14 KB)
- Certification and testing requirements are country-specific and must reflect the animal health status of the region(s) in which the horses have resided or transited.

Health Certificate(s) for Equine Germplasm

- Official germplasm health certificates can be found on the individual country-specific pages.

Port Inspection

Port Inspection for Live Equine(s)

- A USDA port veterinarian **must** inspect the equine(s) at the first U.S. port of entry, unless otherwise indicated on the U.S. import permit. Qualifying horses temporarily entering from Canada by land do not require an inspection.
- The importer or designated agent **must** arrange for port inspection at least 3 business days prior to arrival. Contact information for USDA at the port of entry

is listed on the import permit (if applicable), or you may select the U.S. State below to find contact information for APHIS Port Services.

APHIS Port Services

Use the dropdown below to locate airports that accept live equine shipments.

- Select a State - ▼

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All Contacts

- The initial inspection consists of an examination of the shipment and a review of the required accompanying documentation such as the export health certificate, supplemental health documentation (if required), and the U.S. import permit. View user fee rates for inspection services.

Port Inspection for Equine Germplasm

- A USDA port veterinarian must inspect the equine germplasm at the first U.S. port of entry, except for equine semen from Canada or if otherwise indicated on the U.S. import permit.
- The importer or designated agent must arrange for port inspection at least 3 business days prior to arrival. Contact information for USDA at the port of entry is listed on the import permit, or you can select the U.S. State below to find contact information for APHIS Port Services.

APHIS Port Services

Use the dropdown below to locate ports that accept equine germplasm shipments.

- Select a State - ▼

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Importing Live Equines and Equine Germplasm into the United States Contacts

- Shipments of equine germplasm that are refused entry into the United States should contact USDA Port Services at the port of entry for information on how to return the shipment to the country of origin.

Import Quarantine (only required for live equines)

- All live equines entering the United States must undergo import quarantine, except horses from Canada. Quarantine may be 3 days, 7 days, or 60 days. The quarantine length is determined by:
  - The animal health status of the country or countries of residency where the equine resided in for the 60 days prior to import into the United States.
  - The animal health status of country or countries transited before arrival at the U.S. port of entry.
  - The purpose of entry (competition, breeding, permanent or temporary residency).

For country-specific information on the length of quarantine, see Country-Specific Import Requirements.

- The importer or designated agent must reserve space at an APHIS-approved equine quarantine facility associated with the port of entry at least 3 business days prior to the date of arrival.

Equine Quarantine Facilities

Use the drop down below to locate an APHIS-approved Federal or private quarantine facility.

- Select a State - ▼

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Importing Live Equines and Equine Germplasm into the United States Contacts

- For horses residing in a CEM-affected country or countries within 12 months of seeking import into the United States, exporting from a CEM-affected country, or transiting a CEM-affected country or countries, the importer must also reserve space at an approved CEM quarantine facility. For more information, see Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) Testing for Imported Horses.

Shipments that transit a country of lesser health status, in relation to the country of origin or export, in route to the United States will assume the lesser health status and complete import requirements of that country upon arrival to the United States.

- USDA tests live equines during import quarantine to determine if they are free of certain foreign animal diseases. The cost of diagnostic testing is separate from the quarantine fee. See USDA Import Testing of Horses (152.24 KB) for more information.
- The importer is responsible for all costs and fees associated with the import, including but not limited to USDA fees for port inspection, quarantine stay, and laboratory testing during quarantine.
- USDA may provide cost estimates for federal quarantine at a USDA Animal Import Center. To determine costs associated with a private quarantine facility, you must contact the facility itself.

USDA Transit Process

- Live equines and germplasm transiting the United States from the exporting country to a third country destination must be accompanied by a USDA transit permit and a contingency plan as described in Transit Shipments of Live Animal Commodities (479.88 KB) .
- The process for applying for the transit permit is the same as for the import permit (see USDA Import Permit section). Denoting the route of travel on the application distinguishes the type of permit being requested by the importer.
- The importer must submit a contingency plan with the import permit application.
- USDA oversees transit shipments while in the United States. The importer must arrange for USDA services at least 3 business days in advance by contacting the USDA Port Office that manages the port listed on the transit permit.
- The transit permit lists special instructions for the importer and port staff. For more information, see Transit Shipments of Live Animal Commodities (479.88 KB) and Notice Regarding APHIS Live Animal Import and Third-Country Import Transit Permits.

U.S.-Origin Horses Returning to the United States After Temporary Travel Abroad

Except for U.S.-origin horses that travel only to Canada and then return to the United States, horses that travel abroad must complete import quarantine when they return. The reentry requirements for U.S. horses—including the length of their quarantine—depend on the route of travel, the country or countries of residency during the temporary exportation, and how long the horse was exported outside the United States.

Upon return to the United States, U.S.-origin horses must be accompanied by the original U.S. export health certificate or a certified true copy of the original U.S. export health certificate, the import permit that was issued before leaving the United States, and official hard copies of required health documentation as outlined in the Veterinary Export Health Certificate section. For more information, check Equine Import Requirements for U.S.-Returning Mares and Stallions (195.1 KB).

More Resources

Find Labs Approved To Test for Contagious Equine Metritis

Stallions and mares imported from contagious equine metritis (CEM)-affected countries must test negative for CEM before they can enter the United States.

Use a Broker To Import Horses into the United States

While using a broker or shipping agent when importing horses is not required, they can be very helpful.

View Equine Import Guidance Documents

Review APHIS guidance and other documents for importing equines into the United States.

Need Help?

Live Animal Imports

Contact APHIS' Live Animal Import Permit Team if you have questions before you apply for a permit.

For questions about import permits or permit applications:

Live Animal Import Permit Team

Email: laipermits@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-3300

Live Animal Import and Export

Contact APHIS' Live Animal Import and Export team for questions about current trade restrictions, or other questions not related to permits.

For general questions related to the import of a live animal:

Live Animal Import and Export

Email: laie@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-3300

Importing Live Equines and Equine Germplasm into the United States Contacts Print