USDA Proposes To Modernize U.S. Import Rules for Fresh Boneless Beef and Fresh Boneless Lamb Meat From Certain Regions While Maintaining Strong Protections Against Foot-and-Mouth Disease

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is proposing a regulatory change to better align U.S. import requirements with international standards for protecting against foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). Under existing regulations, fresh boneless beef and fresh boneless lamb meat from certain FMD-affected regions may be imported under a systems approach to prevent the introduction of serious animal diseases. One of the mitigations is for meat to maturate at a minimum of 4 °C for 24 hours to ensure safety.

This proposed rule would lower the minimum maturation temperature requirement to 2 °C, consistent with World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) guidelines, while maintaining all other science-based safeguards already in place. Importantly, this proposal does not expand market access or increase disease risk; rather, it modernizes U.S. requirements to align with global standards.

APHIS has determined that the proposed change would have no significant economic impact on small businesses. The rule does not alter trade volumes or create new access for imports. Consumer access to lean beef and lamb products would continue uninterrupted, supporting both domestic production and global trade efficiency.

These documents will be available for public inspection in the Federal Register on October 19, 2026. Beginning on October 20, 2026, the documents will be open for public review and comment for 60 days, ending on December 21, 2026. To view the documents or submit comments, go to www.regulations.gov and enter APHIS-2023-0016 in the Search field.

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