

**USDA APHIS VETERINARY SERVICES STRATEGY & POLICY
PROTOCOL FOR THE IMPORTATION OF
BREEDING WATER BUFFALO (*Bubalus bubalis*) AND YAK (*Bos grunniens*) FROM
CANADA TO THE UNITED STATES**

October 2022, Update March 2026

This protocol describes the conditions required to import domestic water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*) and domestic yak (*Bos grunniens*) from Canada according to regulations found in 9 CFR Part 93, and the new rule, Importation of Sheep, Goats, and Certain Other Ruminants, published December 3, 2021, [Federal Register :: Importation of Sheep, Goats, and Certain Other Ruminants](#).

1. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- 1.1. The importer must obtain an Import Permit from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Veterinary Services (VS).
- 1.2. The application, **VS Form 17-129, “Application for Import or in Transit Permit,”** may be filed electronically using the [eFile system](#). This permit is valid for 14 days from the date specified on the application as the “proposed arrival date.”
- 1.3. An official health certificate is required. The official health certificate must be issued by a veterinarian designated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and must be endorsed by a veterinarian employed by the CFIA attesting to the certifications and tests required in this protocol.
- 1.4. Properly identified calves under six (6) months of age, (traveling at the side of their dam who has cleared testing), are exempted from the test requirements in Section 4.
 - 1.4.1. These calves must be tested within 6 months of arrival to the destination facility by APHIS or state animal health officials.
 - 1.4.2. Test results for the calves must be forwarded to the Northern Border Port Offices (VS.NBP@usda.gov) and the original port of entry.
- 1.5. The official health certificate must include:
 - 1.5.1. Name and address of the importer.
 - 1.5.2. Destination location for the imported animals.
 - 1.5.3. Species, breed, and number of animals to be imported.
 - 1.5.4. Purpose of the importation.
 - 1.5.5. Individual identification, including the APHIS-required Canadian RFID or UHF eartag number, secondary dangle tag, other approved forms of individual identification, and any other identification present on the animal, including registration number and brands.
 - 1.5.6. Description of the animals, including age in months, sex, breed, and markings (if any).
 - 1.5.7. Region/country of origin.
 - 1.5.8. Address or other means of identifying the premises of origin and any other premises where the animals resided immediately prior to export.
 - 1.5.9. Name and address of the exporter.
 - 1.5.10. Port of embarkation in Canada, the mode of transportation, and port of entry in the United States.

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2. IDENTIFICATION

- 2.1. A “CAN” brand or tattoo must be properly applied before animals arrive at the port of entry except as provided in section 2.6 below.
- 2.2. Improperly applied brands, hair brands, or anything not resulting in a permanent mark is not acceptable.
 - 2.2.1. The CAN brand mark must be no less than 2 inches high or not more than 3 inches high, and must be applied to each animal’s right hip, high on the tail-head (over the junction of the sacral and first coccygeal vertebrae).
 - 2.2.2. The branded area must be shaved before presentation at the port of entry for clear identification.
- 2.3. Alternatively, a tattoo may be used.
 - 2.3.1. If a tattoo is used, it must clearly identify the exporting country with the CAN letters applied to the inside of the left ear and be clearly legible.
 - 2.3.2. The ear must be shaved before presentation at the port of entry for clear identification.
- 2.4. All water buffalo or yaks must be individually identified with an RFID or UHF eartag traceable to the premises of origin of the animal (birthplace). Prior to placing any UHF tags, the importer must contact the intended port of entry, as not all ports are equipped with UHF readers.
- 2.5. A secondary dangle tag is also required. This secondary eartag must be also tamper-resistant and provide unique identification for the individual animal and either use the country code as a prefix or have a mark unique to official eartags of the country of origin. The official eartags must have one of the following numbering systems:
 - 2.5.1. National Uniform Eartagging System; or
 - 2.5.2. Animal identification number, composed of the 3-digit country code and a 12-digit number unique to the animal; or
 - 2.5.3. Premises-based number system.
- 2.6. If the animals are not branded or tattooed, two official tamper-resistant ear tags, (one “124” RFID or UHF tag and the other a “124” visual-only tag with the animal number clearly readable) are required. Both numbers must be listed on the health certificate for correct ID of each animal.
- 2.7. No person may alter, deface, remove, or otherwise tamper with the official identification while the animal is in the United States or moving into or through the United States, except

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the identification may be removed at the time of slaughter.

- 2.8. **NOTE: alternative methods of permanent identification may be used if prior approval is given by Strategy & Policy before the shipment reaches the port. Any alternative methods of identification approved by Strategy & Policy will be communicated promptly through the Northern Border Ports office to the port veterinarians.**

APHIS has agreed and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has indicated they will advise exporters to use this combination when ordering tags from manufacturers:

- **an Alphanumeric EID (UHF or Low frequency): e.g., tamper-resistant RFID “982” tag, or tag number matching dangle tag (described below); and**
- **Associated dangle tag with the following order: CAN-Premise ID (PID - issued by the province) - individual animal numbers from 1 to infinity.**
- **A brand or tattoo is required when using this tag combination.**

Because these species are outside of the “approved indicators” tags, they will have to ensure they do not stamp the IDs with any of the logos on approved tags. There are currently 3 logos for CFIA tags. Once for CCIA, one for Dairy Trace and one for PigTrace: <https://inspection.canada.ca/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/traceability/indicators/eng/1331582406844/1331582476216>

Each province has its own PID website for premise registration:

[Alberta](#)

Telephone: toll-free within Alberta 310-FARM (3276)

[British Columbia](#)

Telephone: 1-888-221-7141

[Manitoba](#)

Telephone: 1-204-945-7684

[New Brunswick](#)

Telephone: 1-506-453-2109

[Newfoundland & Labrador](#)

Telephone: 1-709-637-2088

[Nova Scotia](#)

Telephone: 1-800-279-0825

[Ontario](#)

Telephone: 1-855-697-7743

[Prince Edward Island](#)

Telephone: 1-866-PEI-FARM

[Quebec](#)

Telephone: 1-866-270-4319

[Saskatchewan](#)

Telephone: 1-866-457-2377

[Yukon](#)

Telephone: 1-867-667-3043

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- 3. CERTIFICATION STATEMENTS: The following statements must be on the health certificate:**
- 3.1. Canada is free of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, Rinderpest, Surra, and Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia.
 - 3.2. The animals have been inspected and found to be free from any evidence of communicable disease, and, as far as can be determined, have not been exposed to any such disease during the preceding 60 days.
 - 3.3. The animals were born in the United States or Canada or were legally imported into Canada from a region recognized by the USDA as a region not restricted due to BSE and have been under no movement restrictions within Canada or the United States for at least 60 days prior to importation into the United States.
 - 3.4. The animals for export were part of Canada’s national herd for a minimum period of time. Paragraphs 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 describe how the United States defines “part of the national herd” and the length of time the animals must be part of the national herd.
 - 3.4.1. If the animals for export were imported into Canada from countries recognized by USDA as free of FMD, then these animals must have been free of any import quarantine restrictions and able to move freely within Canada's national herd for a minimum of 90 days prior to export or isolation for export.
 - 3.4.2. If the animals were imported into Canada from a country not recognized by USDA as free of FMD, then the animals for export must have been free of any import quarantine restrictions and able to move freely within Canada's national herd for a minimum of 90 days prior to export or isolation for export.
 - 3.5. The animals are not in quarantine or under movement restriction in Canada.
 - 3.6. The Canadian- origin animals were born on or after March 1, 1999, the date determined by APHIS to be the effective enforcement of a ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban. Animals not of Canadian or United State origin were born after the designated feeding of ruminants with meat-and-bone meal or greaves derived from ruminants feed ban that has been effectively enforced in the whole region since March 1, 1999 (the date of the effective enforcement of a ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban as determined by APHIS).
 - 3.7. For animals imported for breeding, the following certifications are required in addition to the above statements: The animals are from a brucellosis- and TB-free herd. If the animals are not from a brucellosis- and TB-free herd, the isolation and testing protocol in section 4 must be followed.
 - 3.7.1. The animals have been permanently and humanely identified before arrival at the port of entry (see section 2).

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- 3.7.2. The animals have been inspected within 3 days (72 hrs.) prior to exportation to the United States and found to be free from any evidence of communicable disease; and, as far as can be determined, have not been exposed to any such disease during the preceding 60 days.

4. TESTING

- 4.1. The animals must be isolated (isolated and held apart (minimum 10 meters of separation) from the rest of the herd and other livestock for a period of at least 60 days prior to exportation to the United States.
- 4.2. All tests must be performed by a veterinarian designated or accredited and trained by the CFIA.
- 4.3. Tuberculosis (*Mycobacterium bovis*)
- 4.3.1. One negative caudal fold test following standard CFIA procedures is required for each animal while the pre-export group are in isolation per 4.1 above. This test must be performed no more than 30 days prior to presentation at the port of arrival to the United States.
- 4.3.2. A negative test means no detectable response using both palpation and visual examination when read 72 (\pm 6 hours) following injection with intradermal tuberculin.
- 4.3.3. Any animal that is positive to any TB test is ineligible for import into the United States. The balance of the cohort herd will not be allowed entry into the United States until all responders have been removed from the group and their TB status determined negative through comparative cervical testing (CCT) testing or necropsy including negative on histopathology and bacteriological culture for *M. bovis*.
- 4.4. Brucellosis (*Brucella abortus*)
- 4.4.1. A brucellosis test is required for each animal while they are in isolation per 4.1 above; this test must be performed no more than 30 days prior to presentation at the port of arrival to the United States.
- 4.4.2. Undiluted serum samples from the animal(s) held in pre-export isolation must be tested with a Serum Agglutination Test **OR** ELISA **OR** Complement Fixation Test. Animals with non-negative tests are not eligible for export.
- 4.4.3. The balance of the group shall not be allowed entry until the status of any reactor is completely resolved (i.e., supplemental/confirmatory serological testing and subsequent classification as negative; and/or tissue submission of agreed-upon tissues/lymph nodes and subsequent culture result of “no isolation made”).

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- 4.4.4. The balance of the group shall continue to be held in isolation and not be allowed entry until all animals in the group are found to be brucellosis test negative on a second pre-entry brucellosis test, performed at least 30 days after the first pre-entry brucellosis test.

5. PORT OF ENTRY INSPECTION

- 5.1. USDA APHIS VS will require confirmed pre-shipping approval for the import of all Canadian breeder yak and water buffalo imports. Inspection at the port of entry (POE) is preferable. The NBP office determines if it can be completed safely and effectively. The following steps are required to determine if inspection will be possible at the POE or deferred to the destination facility:
- 5.1.1. Importation requires pre-shipment approval from the USDA APHIS VS Northern Border Port Services (NBP) office at vs.nbp@usda.gov.
- 5.1.2. The importer must notify the NBP office and proposed port of entry ([APHIS VS Port Services \(by State\)](#)) at least 14 days in advance of the proposed shipment, providing the address of the destination premises, and the scheduled date and time of arrival. The NBP office will determine if an inspection at the POE is possible. If not, they will arrange an inspection or assessment of the destination facility, as appropriate, to approve the facility. The NBP office will verify that VS personnel are available to perform the inspection of the animals on the proposed date of arrival.
- 5.1.3. Once approved, the NBP office will immediately email notification of the approval to the importer. The importer may then schedule an appointment at the port for clearance.
- 5.1.4. A copy of the email approval notice from the NBP office must be presented to the Port VMO, along with the completed VS Form 17-29, Declaration of Importation. The shipment will not be allowed entry without written (email) notification of approval.
- 5.2. After clearance at the port, the Port VMO will email notification to VS personnel in the destination state that the animals are en route under seal to the destination premises for inspection.

6. REFUSED ENTRY

Any animal designated as a “refused- for- entry import” into the United States for noncompliance with the requirements of this protocol must be removed from the country within a time period specified by the Administrator, standardly within 30 days, or it will be considered abandoned by the importer. Pending removal or abandonment, the animal will be subject to such safeguards as the APHIS inspector determines necessary to prevent the possible introduction of ectoparasites or disease into the United States. If an animal that has been refused entry is not removed from the United States within a prescribed time period or

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is abandoned, it may be seized and destroyed, or otherwise disposed of as the Administrator determines necessary to prevent the possible introduction of disease into the United States.

7. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

Please check the animal health regulations of state of destination for possible additional regulations and requirements for the proposed import ([State Regulations and Import Requirements](#)).