

**USDA, APHIS, VETERINARY SERVICES STRATEGY & POLICY
PROTOCOL FOR THE IMPORTATION OF BISON
FROM ELK ISLAND NATIONAL PARK OR
GRASSLAND NATIONAL PARK, CANADA
TO THE UNITED STATES
November 2023**

1. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1.1. This protocol is for the restricted importation of wood bison (*Bison bison athabasca*) or plains bison (*Bison bison bison*) originating from Elk Island National Park (EINP) in Alberta, Canada, or Grasslands National Park (GNP), Saskatchewan, Canada according to regulations found in 9 CFR Part 93 (9 CFR 93.401(a)).

1.2. The importer must obtain an import permit from the:

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
Veterinary Services (VS)
Strategy & Policy (&P), Unit 39
4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231

Telephone: (301) 851-3300, Menu option 2
Fax: (301) 734-4704

An import permit is obtained by submitting VS Form 17-129, “Application for Import or in Transit Permit,” to the address above. The VS Form 17-129 can be obtained by writing, calling, or downloading it from the APHIS web site:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/permits/

A processing fee must be submitted along with the application. Please view the following website for more information on current processing fees:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/animals/animal_import/animal_imports.shtml

1.3. An official health certificate is required. The official health certificate must be issued by a Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) veterinarian or, if issued by a CFIA-Accredited veterinarian, it must be endorsed by CFIA. The official health certificate must include:

1.3.1. Name and address of the importer.

1.3.2. Purpose of the importation.

1.3.3. Individual identification, which includes the official eartag number or other approved forms of individual identification, and any other identification present on the animal, including registration number and brands.

1.3.4. Description of the bison, including age in months, sex, breed, and markings (if any).

1.3.5. Region/country of origin.

1.3.6. Address or other means of identifying the premises of origin.

2. IDENTIFICATION

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- 2.1. All bison must be individually identified with an official eartag traceable to Elk Island National Park.
- 2.2. Two official ear tags, (one RFID tag and the other a visual-only tag with the same official animal number) are required.
- 2.3. The two official eartags, one in each ear, to reduce the likelihood for extra handling if one is lost. The official eartag(s) must be tamper-resistant and provide unique identification for the individual animal.
 - 2.3.1. Animal identification number, composed of the 3-digit ISO country code and a 12-digit number unique to the animal; or
 - 2.3.2. Premises-based number system; or
 - 2.3.3. A unique animal identification approved by the APHIS Administrator and CFIA.
 - 2.3.4. The official identification must remain on the animal at all times while is in the United States or moving into or through the United States, except for removal at the time of slaughter. In case of lost or damaged eartags, or if removal is required for medical reasons such as abscesses, etc., a replacement eartag with the same identifying information, as the original must be used.

3. CERTIFICATION STATEMENTS: The following statements must be on the health certificate:

- 3.1 The animals were born and raised in the Elk Island National Park, Alberta, or Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan, and have not resided elsewhere prior to their exportation to the U.S.
- 3.2 The bison were born on or after March 1, 1999.
- 3.3 Canada is free of foot-and-mouth disease, surra, and contagious bovine pleuropneumonia.
- 3.4 The bison are not in quarantine in Canada.
- 3.5 The animals were isolated and held apart (minimum 10 meters) from the rest of the bison herd and other animals within Elk Island National Park for a period of at least 60 days prior to exportation to the U.S.
- 3.6 The bison have been inspected within 3 days (72 hrs.) prior to exportation to the U.S. 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.
- 3.7 The bison transport crates and/ or the conveyance were sealed by the CFIA for transport to the United States.

4. TESTING

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- 4.1. All tests must be performed by a veterinarian designated or accredited by CFIA.
- 4.2. Tuberculosis
 - 4.2.1. One negative caudal fold test is required for each bison while the animals are in isolation per Section 3.5 above.
 - 4.2.2. Due to the wild status of the animals, and health safety/ concerns for repeat restraint procedures, APHIS will permit testing anytime during the 60-day pre-embarkation period prior to presentation at the U.S. port of entry.
 - 4.2.3. A negative test means no detectable response using both palpation and visual examination when read 72 (\pm 6 hours) following injection with intradermal tuberculin.
 - 4.2.4. Any animal that is positive to any TB test is ineligible for import into the United States.
 - 4.2.5. The balance of the group 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 CCT testing or necropsy including negative on histopathology and bacteriological culture for *M. bovis*.
- 4.3. Brucellosis:
 - 4.3.1. A fluorescent polarization assay (FPA) brucellosis test is required for each bison while the animals are in isolation per Section 3.5 above; this test must be performed during the 60-day pre-embarkation period prior to presentation at the U.S. port of entry.
 - 4.3.2. An animal that is positive to any brucellosis test is ineligible for import into the United States.
 - 4.3.3. The balance of the group will not be allowed entry into the United States until all reactors have been removed from the group.
 - 4.3.4. The balance of the group shall not be allowed entry until the status of the reactor(s) is completely resolved (i.e. confirmatory serological testing per U.S. standards https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/brucellosis/downloads/aphis_approved_br_sero_labs_sop.pdf and subsequent classification as NEGATIVE; and/or tissue submission of agreed-upon tissues/lymph nodes and subsequent culture result of “no isolation made” .
 - 4.3.5. 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 upon a second pre-entry brucellosis test, performed at least 60 days after the first pre-entry brucellosis test.

5. PORT OF ARRIVAL INSPECTION

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- 5.1. Inspection of imported bison from EINP will consist of two parts: a visual inspection at the port of arrival to determine fitness for further travel (if arriving by air), and a health inspection at the final destination prior to release.
- 5.2. Importers must contact the appropriate VS FiOps representative in the receiving state at least 10 business days in advance of proposed importation to ensure that post-arrival inspection facilities at the final destination may be reviewed and approved by VS, and to ensure APHIS VS inspection personnel are available at the scheduled time of import.
- 5.3. Bison for U.S. entry must be presented to the port of arrival by appointment. Importers must contact the VS port veterinarian at least 72 prior to arrival at the port of presentation to confirm the availability of the port veterinarian.
- 5.4. For bison entering the state of Alaska by land
 - 5.4.1. An inspection of the imported animals shall be requested and coordinated through the Sumas, WA Port of Entry (call 360-988-5715).
 - 5.4.2. The permit will be issued for entry at a port not designated as an approved port for the entry of animals from Canada. The animals may be inspected at the first point of destination or at an intermediate point between the port and first point of destination but must remain isolated until inspected and released by a USDA APHIS Veterinary Medical Officer.
- 5.5. Bison will remain sealed from the port of presentation until they arrive at their final destination, subject to provisions of the 28- Hour Law for feed, water, and rest considerations (this is initiated when the animals arrive in the United States). The port veterinarian should issue a VS form 1-27 and record the CFIA seal numbers on it.
- 5.6. In coordination with the appropriate VS FiOps office, an APHIS VMO will break the seals and inspect the bison upon arrival at the final destination facility. The APHIS VMO will visually inspect and/or use electronic identification collection to verify the individual animal identification on at least 10% of the bison and reconcile the identification with the accompanying health certificate. The APHIS VMO will also visually inspect for clinical signs of disease.

6. POST-ARRIVAL REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1. Any testing under this section must be performed by an APHIS VS VMO or an approved APHIS accredited veterinarian.
- 6.2. Bison imported from EINP and GNP must be held under isolation (separate and apart from all other animals by a distance of 30 feet) for a period of at least 30 days following inspection by the APHIS VMO after arrival at the final destination. Any animals that become ill or die during this period must be reported to the applicable APHIS VS service center representative (who will then notify S&P staff in Riverdale, MD), and the cause of illness or death ascertained. The isolation period may be extended as needed during such contingencies, and any appropriate actions will be taken based on diagnostic findings.

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6.3 The bison will be released by APHIS thirty (30) days after being inspected at the destination location. A VS form 17-30 will be generated as the release form.

7. ADDITIONAL TESTING

A tuberculosis caudal fold test and a brucellosis test (FPA) is recommended to be additionally performed one year following the release for entry of the bison into the United States and/ or regular assessment by the State of Alaska for any euthanized or deceased animals in the herds.