



Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

August 8, 2019

Veterinary Services
Strategy and Policy
Live Animal Imports

4700 River Road
Unit 39

Riverdale, MD 20737

(301)851-3300

Notice Regarding Equine Imports and Transits

USDA would like to bring to your attention the following recent issues and concerns regarding equine imports and transits: 1) Import documentation 2) Horses transiting countries of lesser health status 3) Horses sick or injured upon arrival to the port of entry.

This notice is being shared to make you aware that effective August 26, 2019, at all ports of entry the following policies are fully enforced.

Import documentation

In accordance with Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations part 93.314 (9 CFR 93.314), complete and accurate original documentation must accompany all horse shipments that present for entry into the United States. Previously, USDA has permitted stakeholders to send original documents after the release of horses when revised health certificates and addendums are required. However, this practice requires additional resources and personnel. To align our import requirements and procedures for all ports of entry, USDA no longer permits the release of horses without complete original documentation. Horse shipments arriving in the United States not accompanied by complete and accurate original documentation are refused entry or held until the required documents are received. An import compliance assistance fee may also be charged to the importer, in accordance with Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations part 130.4 (9 CFR 130.4).

Horses transiting countries of lesser health status

USDA works to prevent the entry of diseases that may impact United States agriculture. To further this mission, horse shipments that transit a country of lesser health status, in relation to the country of origin, in route to the U.S. will assume the lesser health status and complete import requirements of that country upon arrival to the U.S. For example, if a horse shipment transits through a Venezuela Equine Encephalitis (VEE) affected country, the horse shipment is required to complete a 7-day quarantine upon arrival to the U.S.

Horses sick or injured upon arrival to the port of entry

USDA also requires each animal be inspected upon arrival, found free of any evidence of communicable diseases and, insofar as can be determined, exposure thereto during the 60 days preceding exportation. From doing a recent audit of equine imports and transits, it has been noted in the last 6 months over 200 imported horses were found sick on arrival, recently castrated or injured due to noncompliant transport containers. These 200 horses were imported from 17 different countries

involving 13 different shipping agents. Noncompliance of transport containers has also been observed on transits through the U.S. All transport crates and containers must comply with International Air Transportation Association (IATA) Live Animal Regulations (LAR) which promotes animal welfare, safety and survival during transport. All horses imported into the U.S. or transiting through the U.S. must present healthy and fit to travel. Horses imported that are found to be sick, injured on arrival, or arrive in overcrowded and otherwise noncompliant containers are charged an import compliance assistance fee due to additional resources needed to support these horses while in quarantine. Quarantine release may be delayed for any clinically ill horse with signs of communicable disease, and any horse(s) in contact with clinically ill horse(s) in quarantine, also known as contact horses. Horses that are transiting through the U.S. may also be detained from further travel and offloaded in accordance to the approved contingency plan if noncompliant transport containers are observed or the horse(s) is deemed unfit to travel until arrangements are corrected or the health of the horse(s) is addressed.

USDA encourages importers to verify that all U.S. import requirements have been met prior to export. Import requirements can be found on the following website: [USDA APHIS VS Equine Import and Export](#).

For more information, questions or concerns, please contact the Acting National Live Animal Import and Export Director, Dr. Rachel Cezar-Martinez, at Rachel.Cezar-Martinez@usda.gov or the National Port Services Director, Dr. Renee Oleck, at Renee.S.Oleck@usda.gov or at the following phone number: (301) 851-3300.