

Procedures for Handling Pet and Performing Bird Importations (Excluding Ratites and Hatching Eggs of Ratites)

1. Purpose and Background

This guidance document outlines the procedures and responsibilities of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Veterinary Services (VS), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel for handling legally and illegally imported pet and performing birds arriving via passenger baggage or cargo. This document discusses the interaction between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and VS regarding bird imports at U.S. ports of entry; a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between those two agencies provides guidance on that working relationship.

For the purposes of this guidance document, avian type classifications are as follows:

- A. Pet bird: Birds and certain poultry species (such as pigeons and doves) imported for the personal pleasure of their individual owners, in shipments of five (5) or fewer birds, and not intended for resale. VS recognizes U.S. origin status when a U.S. accredited veterinarian issues a U.S. export health certificate when the bird departed from the United States.
- B. Performing or theatrical birds/poultry: Birds and poultry intended for use by their owners in shows, theatrical acts, or performances. VS recognizes U.S. origin status if a U.S. accredited veterinarian issued a U.S. export health certificate when the bird departed from the United States.
- C. Smuggled birds: Any bird brought to the United States contrary to Federal law or regulation and not declared to CBP officials at the port of entry.
- D. Non-compliant and declared birds: Any bird brought to the United States contrary to Federal law or regulation and declared to CBP officials, but determined not to be in compliance with Federal law or regulation.
- E. Abandoned birds: Any bird declared to CBP for which the owner gives up ownership or for which CBP cannot find the owner.

This guidance covers (1) VS responsibility for the import of live birds, (2) handling of birds by CBP until VS arrival at the port of entry, (3) responsibility of VS and CBP in regard to bird handling supplies at the port of entry, and (4) the interaction of the FWS and VS at ports of entry, as they relate to the import of birds subject to this document.

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VS has formal relationships with FWS and CBP pertinent to the handling of birds at U.S. ports of entry. VS communicates policy and directions to CBP to handle birds in the absence of VS personnel at the time the bird presents at the port of entry. VS recognizes that FWS has separate authority over the import of various avian types, including those species protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). This guidance represents the Agency's position on this topic. It does not create or confer any rights for, or to any person, and does not bind the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the public. VS may make the information it contains available to the public. VS employees may not deviate from the directions provided herein without appropriate justification and supervisory concurrence.

2. Document Status

- A. Review date: 12/15/2020
- B. This guidance replaces and cancels Veterinary Services Memorandum No. 591.55.

3. Reason for Reissuance

Not applicable.

4. Authority and References

- A. Authorities (*Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR)):

[7 CFR 371.4](#)

[9 CFR 93.100 – 93.102](#)

- B. References:

- [VS-CBP memorandum of agreement](#)
- [Import Procedures for a Pet Bird Entering \(U.S. Origin\) the United States](#)
- [Protocol for Bird Carriers used at U.S. Ports of Entry](#)
- [VS Form 10-4, Specimen Submission](#)
- [VS Form 17-8, Agreement of Pet Bird Owner](#)

5. Audience

VS employees, other Federal and State agencies, and members of the public.

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Avian Type (below) Returning from (across)	HPAI-Free Country (except Canada)	Canada	HPAI Country
U.S. origin Pet Birds	Section 6.A.1	Section 6.A.3	Section 6.A.4
U.S. origin Performing or Theatrical Birds/Poultry	Section 6.A.2		Section 6.A.5
Non-U.S. origin Pet Birds	Section 6.A.6		Section 6.A.6
Non-U.S. origin Performing Birds			

A. APHIS Entry Requirements

- 1) U.S. origin pet birds returning from countries recognized by the U.S. as having a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)-free status (known hereafter as non-HPAI country), except Canada, are subject to the following requirements:
 - a. The owner must obtain a U.S. Permit to Import (VS Form 17-135) for entry and home quarantine of the bird.
 - b. The bird must arrive with a veterinary health certificate issued by the country of export within 30 days of travel to the United States. VS posts the veterinary health certificate criteria on the [Returning U.S. Pet Birds](#) Web site.
 - c. A VS veterinarian will complete a visual veterinary health inspection of the bird at the time of arrival at the first port of entry in the United States. Birds exhibiting clinical signs of disease will be subject to Section 6.C of this document.
 - d. The owner must complete and sign VS Form 17-8, "Agreement of a Pet Bird Owner," at the time of arrival at the first port of entry in the United States, for VS approval to quarantine the bird in the owner's home. By signing VS Form 17-8, Section A, the owner agrees to isolate the bird for at least 30 days in their home and make the bird available for VS personnel to inspect and collect samples 7 to 14 days post entry.
 - e. VS will collect samples from the bird twice, using either a cloacal or fresh fecal swab, for Newcastle disease and avian influenza testing. VS personnel will take the first swab at the time of arrival at the first port of entry in the United States, and the second at the home quarantine 7 to 14 days later. VS will submit both swabs to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) using Form 10-4, according to sample submission instructions accompanying the form.

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- f. After 30 days, if the bird remains clinically healthy and NVSL confirms both sets of samples are negative, the case manager assigned to the import will notify the importer via email or official letter stating that VS will release the bird from home quarantine.
- 2) U.S. origin performing or theatrical birds/poultry returning from non-HPAI countries, except Canada, are subject to the same requirements as U.S. origin pet birds in Section 6.A.(1), with the exception that a foreign health certificate is not required.
 - 3) Birds entering from Canada – including pet birds and performing of theatrical birds/poultry of *any origin* – are subject to the following requirements:
 - a. If entering through an air or sea port, the importer must obtain a U.S. Permit to Import (VS Form 17-135). If entering by a land border crossing, no import permit is required. No Canadian health certificate is required.
 - b. A VS veterinarian will complete a visual veterinary health inspection of the bird at the time of arrival at the first port of entry in the United States. Birds exhibiting clinical signs of disease will be subject to Section 6.C. in this document.
 - c. The owner must complete VS Form 17-8, “Agreement of a Pet Bird Owner,” including a signature from the owner in box B certifying that the bird has been in their possession for at least 90 days, is healthy, and has not been exposed to birds outside those that are a part of the shipment.
 - d. Quarantine is not required.
 - 4) U.S. origin pet birds returning from countries the U.S. recognizes as an HPAI risk (known hereafter as HPAI-country) are subject to the following requirements:
 - a. The owner must obtain a U.S. Permit to Import (VS Form 17-135) for entry.
 - b. The birds must arrive with a veterinary health certificate issued by the country of export within 30 days of travel to the United States. VS posts the criteria for this veterinary health certificate on the [Returning U.S. Pet Birds](#) Web site.
 - c. A VS veterinarian will complete a visual veterinary health inspection of the bird at the time of arrival at the first port of entry in the United States. Birds exhibiting clinical signs of disease will be subject to Section 6.C of this document.
 - d. The bird must complete a 30-day quarantine at a USDA Animal Import Center (AIC) or VS-approved avian quarantine facility.
 - e. VS will collect a cloacal swab sample from the birds, before day 7 of the quarantine, for Newcastle disease and avian influenza testing at NVSL.

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- f. After completion of the 30-day quarantine, if the bird remains clinically healthy and NVSL confirms negative test results, VS will release the bird from quarantine.
- 5) U.S. origin performing or theatrical birds/poultry returning from HPAI countries are subject to the requirements listed in Section 6.A.(4), with the exception that a health certificate is not required.
 - 6) Non-U.S. origin pet birds or performing/theatrical birds/poultry entering from any country (non-HPAI or HPAI), except Canada, are subject to the following requirements:
 - a. The owner must obtain a U.S. Permit to Import (VS Form 17-135).
 - b. The bird must arrive with a veterinary health certificate issued by the country of export within 30 days of travel to the United States. VS posts the criteria for this veterinary health certificate on the [Returning U.S. Pet Birds](#) Web site.
 - c. A VS veterinarian will complete a visual veterinary health inspection of the bird at the time of arrival at the first port of entry in the United States. Birds exhibiting clinical signs of disease will be subject to Section 6.C of this document.
 - d. The bird must complete a 30-day quarantine at a USDA AIC or VS-approved avian quarantine facility
 - e. VS will collect a cloacal swab sample from the bird, before day 7 of the quarantine, for Newcastle disease and avian influenza testing at NVSL.
 - f. After completion of the 30-day quarantine, if the bird remains clinically healthy and NVSL confirms negative test results, VS will release the bird from quarantine.

B. Smuggled/Non-Compliant Birds

VS details procedures for smuggled/non-compliant birds arriving at U.S., ports in separate VS Guidance Documents. The below section provides a brief overview:

- 1) Non-compliant but declared- bird/poultry at a point of entry:
 - a. When a bird is presented without the required import documents (e.g., a VS-issued import permit) but is declared to CBP, it becomes an illegal entry bird, and the owner may choose to:
 1. Abandon the bird to APHIS and sign box D of the VS Form 17-8.
 2. Return the bird to the country of export, if that country will accept it, and sign box C of the VS Form 17-8.

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3. Send the bird to a USDA AIC or VS-approved avian quarantine facility for a 30-day quarantine. All costs associated with transport, quarantine, and testing are the responsibility of the owner.

VS will respond to the CBP notification via email or phone call within 7 hours and arrive at the port of entry to physically receive the bird/poultry from CBP within 24 hours of notification. CBP must maintain control of the bird(s) in approved cages/carriers properly fitted with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters until VS arrival.

- b. If VS determines birds/poultry must be euthanized, VS will perform the euthanasia and work with CBP for proper carcass disposal. **NOTE:** VS can only perform euthanasia following consultation with FWS to confirm the bird is not CITES-protected.
- 2) Smuggled (e.g., not declared by the owner) bird/poultry at a point of entry:
 - a. VS will respond to the CBP notification within 7 hours, via phone call or email.
 - b. CBP must refuse the bird entry to the United States. CBP cannot return the bird/poultry to the owner/transporter, and the bird/poultry becomes the property of APHIS.
 - c. CBP or VS complete blocks 1-5 of VS Form 17-8, and obtain the signature of the owner/transporter in box D, denoting the abandonment of the bird to APHIS.
 - d. If CBP obtains the bird outside of VS presence, CBP will provide VS the original signed VS Form 17-8 and copies of any other paperwork that CBP may require to document the chain of custody of the bird.
 - e. VS must contact FWS for species identification and disposition consultation. If FWS takes ownership of the bird, VS will arrange logistics to transport the bird to the nearest USDA AIC for quarantine and further disposition by FWS.

C. Refused Entry Due to Evidence of Disease

Birds exhibiting clinical signs of disease at the port of entry are not eligible for entry into the United States.

- 1) If birds are destined for home quarantine, the VS veterinarian should contact Port Services for guidance. Port Services will notify Animal Permitting and Negotiation Services (APNS) of the decision to refuse entry, and APNS will follow up as the situation dictates.

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- 2) If birds are destined for quarantine at a USDA AIC or VS-approved avian quarantine facility, the AIC Director will notify APNS of the entry refusal. APNS will follow up as the situation dictates.

The USDA AIC locations include:

Miami Animal Import Center (MAIC)
USDA-APHIS-VS
6300 NW 36 Street
Miami, FL 33122
vspsmia@aphis.usda.gov

New York Animal Import Center (NYAIC)
USDA-APHIS-VS
474 International Boulevard
Rock Tavern, NY 1257
vspsnic@aphis.usda.gov

D. VS Unit Responsibilities

- 1) Animal Products and Negotiation Services (APNS)
 - a. Develops and distributes Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), based on MOUs, which further define duties at the ports of entry.
 - b. Serves as the point of contact (POC) for issues of disease concern related to avian entry, working directly with FWS.
 - c. Serves as the POC for CBP related to bird cages/pet carriers located at the ports of entry. Specifications for cages/carriers of sufficient size to contain multiple species and sizes of birds, as well as the required air filters to prevent the spread of viruses and bacteria, are contained in [this protocol](#).
- 2) Port Services
 - a. Ensures all birds approved for home quarantine complete the home quarantine; provides management of the VS process once the bird(s) arrive at the U.S. port of entry.
 - b. Assigns the case manager function to a port veterinarian for each pet bird in home quarantine. Details are contained in a separate internal SOP.
 - c. Serves as POC when issues requiring resolution arise, including but not limited to issues such as change in route, changes in personnel, any noncompliance, non-negative, or retest requests.
 - d. Develops and distributes SOP for implementation of this Guidance document by Port Services personnel.
 - e. Initiates an Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) investigation when VS is unable to locate an owner who agreed to home quarantine.

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- f. Ensures that bird handling equipment is returned to CBP offices as follows:
 - 1. If the VS port veterinarian uses bird handling equipment, VS will clean and disinfect the cages/carriers and return them to the CBP port of entry facility after use.
 - 2. For carriers that contained birds sent to a USDA AIC or VS-approved avian quarantine facility, the AIC will clean and disinfect the carrier and return it to the original port of entry CBP office. VS will charge the shipping costs to the entity that paid for transporting the bird to the quarantine center (either FWS or the bird owner).
- 3) Animal Import Centers (AICs) and VS-Approved Avian Quarantine Facilities
 - a. Serves as the quarantine location for birds not destined for home quarantine.
 - b. Coordinates inspection performance at the first point of entry, as needed.
- 4) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL)
 - a. Uses virus isolation to tests samples for Newcastle disease and avian influenza.
 - b. Requests additional sample submissions at its discretion.
 - c. Processes test samples and provides results as per internal SOPs.
 - d. Provides guidance on the collection of samples and sample submission, as needed.

7. Inquiries

Please direct any inquiries regarding this guidance to:

USDA APHIS Veterinary Services
National Import Export Services
Animal Permitting and Negotiation Services
Phone: (301) 851-3300, option 2
Email: VS.Live.Animals.Import.Permits@aphis.usda.gov