



WTO Notification: APHIS Acceptance of Electronic Signatures from USDA Accredited Veterinarians

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The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) utilizes a two-tiered approval system for the issuance and endorsement of U.S. origin veterinary export health certificates for live animals, including germplasm. The USDA Accredited Veterinarian qualifies the animal for export, performs the pre-export examination, and issues (completes and signs) the veterinary export health certificate. After the export certificate is issued by a USDA Accredited Veterinarian, it is sent to APHIS' Veterinary Services (VS) as the U.S. Competent Authority for Animal Health for review and endorsement.

Effectively immediately, VS will accept U.S. veterinary export health certificates for live animals and germplasm that have been electronically signed and issued by a USDA Accredited Veterinarian through the Veterinary Export Health Certification System (VEHCS), a secure, online U.S. government-owned system controlled by APHIS. There will be no change made to Competent Authority signature/endorsement of the veterinary export health certificate. If digital endorsement is not permitted by a given trading partner, APHIS will continue to apply an ink (wet) signature and embossed seal to veterinary export health certificates during endorsement. Regardless of the type of signatures applied, an original, hardcopy of the veterinary export health certificate will travel with the shipment during the export process.

In the event the authenticity of a U.S. live animal or germplasm veterinary export health certificate that has been electronically signed by the USDA Accredited Veterinarian comes into question, the "VEHCS Certificate Viewer" website (www.aphis.usda.gov/HCverify) can be used to perform document verification. To view an online guide explaining how to utilize the certificate viewer, [click here](#).