

Office of Agricultural Affairs
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April 24, 2020

Subject: U.S. Acceptance of Electronic Certificates

Dear DG Trade Officials,

Following up to your letter of March 24 on export certificates for animals, plants and their products, we would like to provide you with an overview of the responses we have received from U.S. regulatory authorities on the acceptance of electronic documents for shipments exported from the European Union to the United States. Please note that some of these responses may have already been sent to you directly by the relevant services.

Plants and Plant Products

APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) informed us that to help facilitate the clearance of imported plants and plant products during the COVID-19 emergency, APHIS and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) accept electronically produced versions of phytosanitary certificates. Importers and brokers may upload the electronic documents to the Automated Commercial Environment using the Document Imaging System or provide them by other means, such as email attachments. Acceptable phytosanitary certificates include scanned copies of original certificates, electronic certificates created through a participating country's ePhyto system, or signed paper forms. Certificates should be legible and include APHIS-required statements. In addition, APHIS allows precleared consignments to be accompanied by an email from APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) with an electronic copy of PPQ Form 203 attached, if the original form is not available. (guidance effective since March 27)

Animal Products

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/bulletins/2858991>

USDA APHIS Allows Copies of Veterinary Health Certificate in ACE-DIS due to COVID-19
USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service sent this bulletin at 04/08/2020 12:22 PM EDT

Effective Immediately through May 16, 2020: USDA APHIS Allows Copies of Veterinary Health Certificate in ACE-DIS for Shipment Clearance due to COVID-19 Pandemic
The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) recognizes the unprecedented challenge that the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic poses to trade. To alleviate impact on animal origin commodities imports, APHIS provides the following interim guidance to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agriculture specialists assigned to review required import information for animal products and by-products regulated by USDA APHIS. This guidance replaces previous editions that were communicated with CBP.

CBP's agriculture specialists may accept all import documents – including veterinary certificates – uploaded to the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE)-Document Image

System (DIS) regardless of disease status of the exporting country. ACE is the United States' single window customs system used by CBP to collect information on imports (import declarations). ACE manages DIS to collect scans of documents and requires specific customs brokerage software. Acceptable import documents include veterinary certificates and supporting documents for veterinary import permit requirements.

USDA APHIS continues to require original hard copy veterinary health certificates under the following conditions:

- Shipments of high risk products:
- Bovine serum: fetal bovine serum, newborn calf serum, calf serum, donor bovine serum, adult bovine serum from all countries, and
- Fresh and/or frozen meat and poultry from all countries in situations when the original hard copy veterinary health certificate has not been provided to USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS); if the original certificate has been provided to FSIS, CBP agriculture specialists may accept a copy of the certificate uploaded to ACE-DIS. Shipments arriving in the United States without a veterinary health certificate, either original or copy uploaded into ACE-DIS, will be refused entry or held until the required documents are received. If there is reason to believe a certificate uploaded into ACE-DIS is fraudulent, CBP retains the shipment on hold until the original hard copy veterinary health certificate is reviewed.

This guidance is effective for shipments arriving through May 16, 2020.

Live animals and germplasm

Original hard-copy veterinary health certificates continue to be required for live animals and germplasm.

Fresh and/or frozen meat and poultry Certificates Required by USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS)

FSIS continues to require an original official certificate and is closely monitoring any disruption at point of entry. Guidance will be updated as appropriate.

Please direct further questions to Gerda Vandercammen; vandercammeng@state.gov.

Yours Sincerely,

Anthony Gilbert – e-signed

Anthony Gilbert
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U.S. Mission to the European Union