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# USDA Releases Animal Disease Risk Analysis Information, Finalizes Licensing, Inspections, and Procurement Rules

## **USDA Makes Foreign Animal Disease Status Evaluation Public**

On 20 July, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), made public for the first time an informational document entitled “Process for Foreign Animal Disease Status Evaluations, Regionalization, Risk Analysis, and Rulemaking”<sup>1</sup>.

APHIS regulates the importation of animals and animal products to protect against the introduction of animal diseases into the United States. 9CFR, Chapter I, Subchapter D, Parts 91–99 describe APHIS’ procedures for accepting and evaluating requests for regionalization based on information about the status of animal disease in the source region, veterinary infrastructure, livestock demographics, and degree of physical or other separation from regions of higher disease risk. APHIS uses this information and information from other sources to determine whether and at what risk animals may be imported into the country.

This is the first time the USDA has made public a document that describes the way APHIS applies risk analysis to the decision making process for regionalization. The document describes “the process for initiation of an evaluation; the composition of the review teams that participate in various components of the evaluation; the role of site visits in evaluations; the types of risk analyses that are conducted and the situations in which different types of analyses are used; the assignment of responsibility for conduct of risk analysis;

## **REGULATION UPDATES**

### **OLAW Modifies Assurances Schedules**

On 13 July, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced changes relating to Animal Welfare Assurances and annual reports<sup>3</sup>. The Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) will now approve most Assurances for periods of up to four years, instead of five, to allow time for the review and approval of renewal Assurances. OLAW is now strongly encouraging institutions to use the calendar year (*i.e.*, 1 January–31 December) for the reporting period of annual reports, and has standardized the due dates of the annual reports it requires in order to allow OLAW to be more responsive to the research community and help institutions track and comply with reporting requirements.

### **USDA Extends Comment Period on Changes to Regulations on Birds, Rats, and Mice**

On 21 July, APHIS extended the comment period for its advance notice of proposed rulemaking regarding several changes it is considering to the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) Regulations to promote the humane handling, care, treatment, and transportation of birds, rats, and mice not specifically excluded from coverage under the AWA<sup>4</sup>. APHIS will consider all comments received on or before 1 November, 2004.

### **China Sets Up a Veterinary Bureau in its Ministry of Agriculture**

China recently announced the establishment of a Veterinary Bureau in its Agriculture Ministry to supervise the country’s veterinary sector, and appointed Jia Youling—a noted animal husbandry expert—as its Chief Veterinarian and Director<sup>5</sup>.

The new bureau is expected to improve control of animal diseases, improve public health, increase income of Chinese farmers, and promote agricultural trade. It will develop laws and regulations on animal quarantine, and lists of banned animals and products; supervise the animal quarantine; and enact policies on animal quarantine, safety of animal products, and animal rights. This news may indicate that China is adopting international standards in veterinary practice.

the basis for recommendations to APHIS management regarding requests; the regulatory process APHIS follows to seek public comment on recommendations to recognize regions and allow the requested importations; and time considerations from initial request to final rulemaking<sup>1</sup>.”

## **USDA Finalizes Licensing, Inspections, and Procurement Rules for Dogs, Cats, and Other Animals**

On 14 July, USDA APHIS amended the Animal Welfare Act Regulations “to revise and clarify the exemptions from the licensing requirements, the procedures for applying for licenses and renewals, and the

restrictions for acquiring dogs, cats, and other animals<sup>2</sup>.” This rule, which finalizes the amendment proposed by the USDA on 4 August 2000, is effective 14 August.

In its final rule, the USDA APHIS clarifies “that the AWA and the regulations regulate the wholesale pet industry, not the retail pet industry. Sales by retail pet stores are not regulated. The term ‘retail pet store’ is defined in Sec 1.1 of the regulations as ‘any outlet where only the following animals are sold or offered for sale, at retail, for use as pets: Dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, gophers, chinchilla, domestic ferrets, domestic farm animals, birds, and cold-blooded species. Such definition