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APHIS solicits comments on regulations for the care of ferrets

On 5 August 2005, the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS) published a notice of petition and request for comments related to the possibility of developing new species-specific standards for the humane handling, care, treatment, and transportation of the domestic ferret (*Mustela furo*)¹.

At present, ferrets are covered under 9 CFR, Part 3, the section of the Animal Welfare Act regulations that describe the general standards of care for warm-blooded animals.

In a petition dated 10 March 2004, the International Ferret Congress asked APHIS to develop specific regulations that address the unique needs of ferrets, as has been done for other species. The petitioners pointed to behavioral abnormalities, special needs during weaning and transportation, as well as frequent reports of malnutrition, starvation, pneumonia, prolapsed rectums, and seizures as evidence of the need for these new regulations.

APHIS is soliciting comments on the following issues:

“1. Should specific standards be implemented for the welfare of domestic ferrets? If yes, please explain what standards you believe are needed and how they will ensure ferret welfare (for example: cage size, number of animals shipped together, minimum/maximum temperatures, ventilation, transportation age, etc., and how these standards will prevent aggressive behavior, reduce stress on the animal, promote health, etc.)”

“2. What specific problems have dealers, exhibitors, or research facilities had with the current handling, care, treatment, and transportation standards that apply to ferrets and how would ferret-specific standards eliminate them?”

“3. Should there be minimum age requirements for the transportation of domestic ferrets, and, if so, what factors should be considered in determining those requirements?”¹

APHIS will consider all comments received on or before 4 October 2005.

Individuals can submit comments online at: <http://www.epa.gov/feddoCKET>.

1. USDA APHIS. Notice of petition and request for comments. Animal welfare; standards for ferrets. *Federal Register* **70(150)**, 45322–45323 (5 August 2005).

APHIS requests extension to collect information on transportation of guinea pigs, hamsters, and rabbits

On 27 June 2005, APHIS announced its intention to request an extension of approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) of an information collection in support of its Animal Welfare Act regulations for the humane treatment and handling of guinea pigs, hamsters, and rabbits¹.

The reporting and record keeping requirements of 9 CFR part 3, subparts B, include regulations intended to ensure the humane treatment of guinea pigs, hamsters, and rabbits during transportation. APHIS is asking OMB to approve the continued use of its current information collection activity for an additional 3 years.

APHIS' current regulations require that guinea pigs, hamsters, and rabbits be shipped in containers that comply with the regulations, and that are labeled with the words 'Live Animals' and arrows indicating the correct positioning of the container. Intermediate handlers and carriers can only accept shipping containers that meet these requirements unless they

are accompanied by documentation indicating that the enclosure is acceptable. Intermediate handlers and carriers must also attempt to contact the recipient at least once every six hours and must document said attempts. In addition, animals shipped in temperatures below 45 °F (7.2 °C) must be accompanied by a certificate signed by a USDA-accredited veterinarian indicated that the animal is acclimated to such conditions.

APHIS is trying to determine if these information collections are necessary for the proper functioning of APHIS; determine the accuracy and validity of the methods and assumptions for collecting this information; and minimize the burden of collecting this information.

1. USDA APHIS. Extension of approval of an information collection; comment request. Notice of request for extension of approval of an information collection; animal welfare; guinea pigs, hamsters, and rabbits. *Federal Register* **70(122)**, 36916–36917 (27 June 2005).